An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the Lived Experiences of Non-Native English-Speaking Doctoral Candidates in the Successful Completion of Study

MAGGIE HARDMAN

School of Science, Engineering and Environment

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 2020.

Abstract

The slow completion of doctoral degrees is a serious concern; for students, supervisors, departments, institutions and economies. Themes such as the supervisor relationship have been well documented, however, there is a paucity of literature on the underlying, often hidden reasons for slow completion of study, and particularly for non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates.

This study uses the conceptual framework of comparative Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to understand the lived experiences of two groups of non-native English-speaking doctoral holders; Study Group 1, that had completed their doctorate in a timely manner and Study Group 2, that were late completers. The participants were interviewed in-depth using a semi-structured narrative design, and these qualitative data were studied using IPA to identify commonalities and differences between the two groups.

The individual lived experiences of the participants show that it is their unique personal make-up, in terms of their mental health, their support network, their self-identity and their personal drive, which determine how quickly they complete their study, rather than the superficial factors that are more socially and institutionally acceptable reasons for slow completion, and which are well documented in the literature. Furthermore, comparing the two groups allows for differences and commonalities to be drawn out, with the potential measures that could have helped the participants in Study Group 2 to progress more efficiently. These include increasing pastoral support at all stages of the PhD journey and increasing training available for both PhD students and supervisors. Developing effective pastoral structures requires there to be a greater understanding of the experiences that affect progression and completion, which is the focus of this study.

The outcome of this study, therefore, is a gestalt of the lived experiences of two groups of non-native English-speaking doctoral holders; one group that had completed in a timely manner, and one group that had taken longer than normal timescales to complete their doctorate, thus providing a more in-depth, comprehensive understanding of relevant issues which impact on the timely completion of doctoral study. The study, therefore, provides new literature that articulates the narratives of non-native English-speaking PhD candidates through exploring their lived experiences, contributing to the gaps in literature relating to reasons for untimely completion of doctoral study in the UK.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Jason Underwood, for his kindness, patience, guidance and support throughout the last six years of my doctoral journey. I am privileged in having had such an exceptional supervisor; I could not have done it without you Jason.

I would also like to pay tribute to the participants of this study; your endurance and hard work in finally completing your doctorate was inspirational to me.

My gratitude also goes to my friends and colleagues that make up my personal and professional support network at Salford and beyond, your genuine interest and support was much appreciated.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my late parents.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the thesis by providing the process adopted in the research study, which uses a comparative Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) strategy to explore the lived experiences of two groups of non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates that have recently completed their study at the University of Salford, with the overarching aim to uncover the core, underlying reasons for time to completion of their PhD study. The chapter commences with the research background, which contextualises the study and presents the research problem. This is followed by the aim, objectives and scope of the study being presented, together with highlighting the methodological steps taken to achieve the aim and objectives. The final section of the chapter provides an outline of the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Background to the Research

The degree of Doctor of Philosophy was first mentioned in the thirteenth century (Jones, 2018); although there had previously been doctorates awarded by the University of Bologna (Amaral & Carvalho, 2020). At this time, doctorates were awarded following an apprenticeship lasting many years, and were often awarded in middle age, primarily as a means of accrediting university teachers (Taylor, 2012). This tradition became known as the 'Humboldtian tradition' after Wilhelm von Humboldt (Watson, 2010). Yale University started awarding PhDs in 1861, for original work in science or in the humanities, and the first PhD in the UK was awarded by Oxford University on 11th March 1920 (Noble, 1994).

Prior to the 1980s, the main form of doctorate awarded was the Doctor of Philosophy, then in the 1980s, professional and other forms of doctorates began to emerge (Kot & Hendel, 2011). Since the 1990s, there have been considerable changes in the sector, such as the increasing number of entrants at doctoral level, the diversified forms of doctoral education being introduced, new PhD providers (such as Doctoral Training Centres) entering the market, and

other degrees besides the traditional route PhD being offered, such as Doctor of Education (EdD) and Doctor of Engineering (EngD), which adopt different methods of delivery.

With growing international interest in diversifying the doctorate, doctoral programmes of different kinds were therefore being developed in different disciplinary, institutional and national settings and competition amongst providers for potential international doctoral candidates became stiffer than ever before (Danby & Lee, 2012). The drivers for these changes were mainly from the UK agencies and bodies, which helped to govern the quality of PhDs in the UK at that time; namely HEFCE, QAA, and RCUK (Research Councils UK).

Another reason for the move towards different modes of study was that RCUK invested around £20 million per year of 'Roberts' funding, as a result of the Roberts Report (Roberts, 2002), between 2003 and 2010/11 specifically for skills training for PhD candidates, leading to more structured degree programmes and a more consistent level of training (QAA, 2019). Some HEIs recognised the value of taught elements as part of the doctoral journey (originally thought of as 'add-ons' to the doctoral experience), and together with the Roberts funding, accepted these as a fundamental and core activity of doctoral education (Danby & Lee, 2012). Many HEIs also recognised that alternative PhD routes provided more contact and often support, and taught elements helped to provide the necessary research skills in order to complete in a timely manner.

These structural changes to the UK doctorate were summarised in a paper by Taylor (2012), in which he outlined the transformations in the doctorate as being massification (the significant increase in the number of doctorates being awarded), internationalisation (doctoral candidates studying in another country), diversification (the move away from what was seen as a 'typical'

doctoral candidate – white, male, young and middle class), casualisation (more part time students), dislocation (off campus and distance learning), augmentation (more than one supervisor), commodification (candidates as customers with a right to expect certain standards), McDonaldisation (churning out degrees in a shorter time), regulation (the move away from the 'secret garden' model to the 'rules of engagement' model), cross-fertilisation (cross disciplinary degrees), proliferation (of types of doctorates), and capitalisation (graduates being employed in various settings) (Taylor, 2012). These transformations are still ongoing in the current doctoral landscape and will be discussed in Chapter 2.

In the UK, the current doctoral landscape is still in a time of change; new regulatory bodies have recently been formed and doctoral degrees are gaining much more attention. In 2018, RCUK was replaced by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI, 2019), although the functions have remained the same: it is a strategic body which brings together the research councils to create the best possible environment for research to flourish. HEFCE was replaced by the Office for Students in 2018 (OfS, 2019) and the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) was replaced by the Research Excellence Framework (REF) in 2014.

Through all of these changes, timely completion of UK doctoral study remains an important issue to all stakeholders, not least because of the current climate of global economic and political uncertainty, in which students face higher tuition fees than any generation before them. Resources are becoming scarcer in UK HEIs, and this is forcing them to make difficult decisions, as more has to be achieved with less. HEIs are therefore being squeezed from both sides: to accept greater numbers of PhD candidates from a potentially smaller pool, and for them to progress and complete in a timely manner: the age-old quality versus quantity argument. In addition to this, there are tighter restrictions from UK Visas and Immigration

(UKVI and previously UK Border Agency) in terms of visas for students (UKVI, 2019), and it is uncertain how Brexit will impact on future numbers of doctoral students coming to the UK for their PhD study. Simultaneously, internationalisation of the HE sector means many more students travelling to other countries (and cultures) for their studies and so doctorates are more important than ever before in getting ahead in academia, especially for international candidates in a global market.

Untimely completion of doctoral study first emerged as an issue in the 1980s by the Swinnerton-Dyer Report (1982) and the Winfield Report (1987), and then became more widely recognised as a more serious issue when HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) published a report in 2005 (2005/02) which examined the rates of completion for a cohort of students attending UK HEIs (who began a PhD in 1996-97). Their progress was monitored for seven years, through to 2002-03. After five years, 57% of full-time students, and 19% of part-time students had completed on time. After seven years, the rates were 72% and 35%, respectively. Significant differences were reported in six areas, including financial backing, student domicile, age on entry, previous qualifications, subject, and mode of study (HEFCE 2005/02). It is alarming that nearly a third (28%) of full time PGRs and almost two thirds (65%) of part time students did not complete their study after seven years. An update report was published in October 2007 (HEFCE 2007/28) which extended the findings of the 2005 report to include more recent data from 2003/04, 2004/05 and 2005/06. Two additional factors, ethnicity and disability, which were not considered in the 2005 report, were also examined. The intention of the report was to inform the discussions around timeliness of completion and the quality of doctoral supervision more generally. The ten-year trends were monitored for the 1996/07 cohort, showing a rise in completion of full-time students of 4% (to 76%) and a rise of 13% (to 48%) for part-time students. Therefore, whilst the rates do rise after

the ten-year period, which is to be expected given the amount of time lapsed, the rise is not significant for full time students. A report published in July 2010 (HEFCE 2010/21) showed qualification rates for individual HEIs and measured total number of doctorates, total qualifiers (with percentage of qualifiers), the benchmark (which is a sector-adjusted average) and standard deviation. For the first time, completion statistics were available in the public domain, available to download from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, 2019) and individual HEIs were in the spotlight. Since then, some HEIs with poor completion statistics have been trying to address the issue, including the University of Salford. In the HEFCE report (2010/21), the University of Salford had an overall qualification rate of 49% for full time overseas students and 45% for home and EC students, against an average of 74% across all UK HEIs (HEFCE, 2010/21). Untimely completion of doctoral study has therefore been a particular problem over the last decade across all HEIs, including Salford. A changed structure of regulations and fees from October 2011, and new strategic plans for PGRs at Salford, mean that tighter controls are in place and the results of this are now becoming apparent, as the first cohort of completions come through. There are some improvements in progression rates, with doctoral candidates having to complete an end of first year assessment (Interim Assessment) and end of second year assessment (Internal Evaluation) before registration for the following year (for full time traditional route candidates). Other developments such as a tightly controlled timeline of deadlines make clear the route for timely completion and students are aware from the outset what the expectations are.

However, despite efforts at the University of Salford (and other UK HEIs) to monitor and attempt to address timely completion of doctoral study by mechanisms such as tighter progression monitoring and changes to fee structures, there remains little empirical evidence as to the underlying, core reasons which cause untimely progression and completion of doctoral

study, yet better understanding of why some students may struggle to complete on time is in the interests of all stakeholders, since untimely or non-completion is not only a personal loss and bad experience for the individual concerned, it is a loss to the university in terms of funding, league tables and thus, reputation; to the wider academic community, and ultimately to the economy in terms of the opportunity cost of untimely or non-completion (Tan & Meijer, 2001).

Recent studies have attempted to link slow progression and completion to aspects such as training or monitoring procedures, but given that doctoral study is a detailed and lengthy study, these cross-sectional studies can, at best, only estimate the likely impact of these factors on better progression and completion rates.

1.2 Justification for the Study

Since completion rates are of serious concern to all HEIs, and completions tend to be more *difficult* for international (non-native English speaking) students as expressed by authors such as Lee (2012), the thorny issue of *why* students are not completing in a timely manner needs to be addressed. Some of the questions that this raises are as follows: What are the experiences of doctoral candidates that take longer than expected to complete? Are the attributes measured in the HEFCE reports (2005/02 and 2007/28) the main contributing factors for untimely completion? What other factors cause doctoral candidates to progress more slowly than expected? Are there more complex, possibly underlying reasons that contribute to untimely completion? What can HEIs do to help support candidates who may have a non-standard entry profile, to support these students and ultimately minimise attrition and increase their completion rates?

The six themes identified in the 2005 HEFCE report (2005/02), the additional two aspects of ethnicity and disability, as studied in the 2007 report (HEFCE 2007/28), along with other possible factors contributing to non-completion, including first language, are addressed in this thesis. These poor completion rates have a serious potential impact on UK HEI's, because ultimately, non-completion of PGR studies affects funding, in two ways: firstly, by loss of direct resources from the funding bodies and secondly, more indirectly, overseas students (particularly) may choose to study for their doctorate elsewhere, taking their sponsorships with them.

Therefore, despite all of the changes in the doctoral landscape over the last fifteen years particularly, there remains a dearth of literature within the context of the increasing numbers of non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates, and their distinct challenges in completing their doctorate (Elliot & Kobayashi, 2018). Whilst there are gaps in the literature, in terms of concrete solutions and tested methods of overcoming the problems of untimely completion for PGRs, there are even greater gaps in the literature, in terms of understanding the unique characteristics and experiences that make up each individual (non-native English-speaking) PhD candidate, and thus, their propensity to complete in a timely manner. Several authors have outlined good practice for the candidate and advice on generic factors that may contribute to timely completion of study (Phillips & Pugh, 2010; Cryer, 2006; DePoy & Gitlin, 1993; Leonard, 2001; Petre & Rugg, 2010; Finn, 2005; Dunleavy, 2003; Thomson & Walker, 2010). Yet, there is a lack of empirically tested published material as to *why* some non-native English-speaking PGRs may take longer than expected to complete. While some studies have taken a positivist and reductionist approach to explore the possible 'generic' causes for untimely completion, there have been no studies conducted that have taken a more interpretative and constructivist approach in the context of elucidating the nuances of non-native English-

speaking candidates and to really understand their lived experiences of doctoral study journey in the UK.

This research, therefore, proposes to take a different approach to studying this phenomenon. It firstly explores the wide range of potential factors as proposed in the secondary literature that have been documented to impact on timely progression and completion for international PGRs, such as motivation, family life, cultural influence, language barriers, and lifestyle choices, together with the seven factors which showed the 'significant and material differences' in the HEFCE reports of 2005, 2007 and 2010. However, the study goes beyond this to explore the lived experiences of two groups of recently completed international PhD holders, in order to *understand* the barriers and enablers that they encountered during their study. This allows for their personal, unique, core (and sometimes underlying) reasons behind time to completion of their doctoral study to be brought to light. A reductionist approach would be inappropriate to understand the reasons why the phenomena occurs, since the weakness of the approach here would be that each individual experiences the PhD journey differently; reasons for untimely completion may be portrayed as barriers, whereby in reality, these may not reflect how this impacts on the candidate's life. The study, therefore, takes a hermeneutic approach, to interpret meaning from the superficial, often socially acceptable and reported reasons for untimely completion. Through a comparative Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, previously underlying and undiscovered reasons for time to completion will be explored through the lived experiences of PhD candidates. Untimely completion of study has an impact on the student, the supervisor, the school, and the university; therefore, to gain a deeper understanding of the real root causes reflected in the lived experiences of recently completed international PhD holders is worthy of study, since only by understanding meaning, can there be positive influence on time to completion of study.

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to explore the lived experiences of two groups of recently completed, non-native English-speaking doctoral holders and to understand the underlying factors impacting on time to completion of study.

In order to achieve the aim, the objectives are:

1. To establish the current landscape of doctoral education in the UK context for non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates.
2. To identify the factors that impact on time to completion of PhD study.
3. To explore the lived experiences of two groups of non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates (timely and untimely completions) during their journey of study.
4. To establish the underlying factors to timely completion of study for non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates.
5. To compare the commonalities and differences between the two study groups.

1.4 Research Questions

What is the context of a UK Doctorate?

This question will help to determine the context of what a doctoral education is in the UK. It links with objective 1: To establish the current landscape of doctoral education in the UK context for non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates. This question is answered by a comprehensive, critically evaluative literature review.

What is considered timely completion for UK doctoral candidates?

What are the metrics used to measure doctoral completions? What is considered to be the normal timescale for doctoral completion? This will be addressed in the literature review.

What are the barriers to timely completion of study?

Factors that been put forward as barriers to timely completion, such as financial backing; student domicile, ethnicity and first language; age on entry; previous qualifications; subject; mode of study; and disability are examined. This research question links with objective 1: To establish the current landscape of doctoral education in the UK context for non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates; and objective 2: To identify the factors that impact on time to completion of PhD study. This question is answered by a comprehensive, critically evaluative literature review.

How does the candidate reflect on their lived experience?

Each PhD holder has lived through the experience of being a PhD candidate and has a unique set of attributes and conditions that affected the PhD journey, thus each journey is different, which, when the person is reflecting on the experience, can have significant meaning to the individual. There may be potential barriers and enablers on the surface, but are there more complex, possibly underlying reasons that have contributed to the candidate's time to completion? Through a comparative IPA of two groups of completers (timely and untimely), the study will explore their doctoral journeys and analyse the underlying reasons why the candidate completed in that particular time frame. This research question links with objective 3: To explore the lived experiences of two groups of non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates during their journey of study; and objective 4: To establish the underlying factors to timely completion of study for non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates.

What are the commonalities and differences in the two study groups?

Study group one had completed their doctorate in 52 months or less, and the second study group had completed their doctorate in excess of 52 months; therefore, in an untimely manner and considered to be late completers. Are there potentially any commonalities and differences in the accounts of the participants in the two study groups? If so, what are these and did they impact on the time to completion? This links with objective 5: To compare the commonalities and differences in the two study groups.

1.5 Scope of the Study

Given the lack of previous qualitative literature on the completion of doctoral study in the UK, addressing the 'why' question, this study focuses on the lived experiences of two groups of recently completed, non-native English-speaking doctoral holders from the University of Salford, in determining their underlying reasons for timely or untimely completion of study.

1.6 Methodology

The research strategy adopted flows from the underpinnings of the research: the research philosophy and approach. This study is a qualitative, phenomenological inquiry, using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), grounded in a philosophical stance that is made up of a constructivist or relativist phenomenological ontology, hermeneutically interpretivistic epistemology and value laden axiology. The research approach is very much inductive and exploratory in nature, and so it is appropriate, therefore, for this study to use the research strategies which are more commonly associated with these underpinnings. This phenomenological study, therefore, examines the real-life, lived out experiences of two groups

of non-native English-speaking doctoral holders that have recently completed their study at the University of Salford. A comparative IPA was conducted of the two groups of completers (one group that had completed in a timely manner, i.e. within 52 months) and the other that had taken longer and were considered to be late completers), in order to draw out potential commonalities and differences between the two groups.

In order to achieve the objectives, the following methodological steps are undertaken:

1. A literature review is conducted to investigate the issues surrounding PhD study. The literature on doctoral completions is sparse, and that which is addressed is US and Australian centric. Very little has been studied in a UK context and none in this particular context.

2. A pre-study focus group is conducted to identify possible themes of untimely progression / completion, conducted with third year, full-time, non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates. The purpose of this was initially to be part of the main study, although this was not the final outcome; rather, the focus group is presented in the thesis as a pre-study to the main study, to explore those initial exploratory discussions in an attempt to understand the important themes surrounding untimely completion of PhD study. Thematic analysis is used, therefore, as the analytic technique for this pre-study. There are particular limitations of this methodological step, in that the sample was made up of eighteen third year candidates; in other words, these students had not completed to the point of submission at the time of the focus group and thus, had not been subject to the particular strains of the writing up period. However, the findings from the focus group corroborated the literature review findings and so this methodological step remains part of the study, but as a pre-study.

3. In-depth, semi structured, narrative style interviews are conducted with two groups of non-native English-speaking doctoral holders that have recently completed their study. Study group one had completed their doctorate in a timely manner of 52 months or less; and the second

group had taken longer to complete their doctorate and are therefore considered to be late completers. Their lived experiences of being a PhD candidate at the University of Salford are analysed, and potential commonalities and differences between the two study groups are highlighted. Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009, 2013) identified that very small sample sizes are appropriate for IPA and this is one of the reasons that two groups of five participants each are presented in this study. By exploring and phenomenologically analysing the lived experiences of these two groups of non-native English-speaking doctoral holders, where participants feel able to share their narrative, rich and deep data are uncovered as to the commonalities and differences between them, and ultimately the underlying reasons for time to completion.

4. A Reflexive Journal has been compiled throughout the study, to document personal reflections, which includes experiences and thoughts whilst attending conferences/workshops in Birmingham, London, Edinburgh, Surrey and Bristol. It also includes personal experience of dealing with non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates on a day-to-day basis in a work context. The reason for compiling this journal is that reflexivity in a value laden IPA study is crucial, it provides research rigour and thus, adds validity to the study, as asserted by Smith et al. (2009, 2013). Since the experience of the researcher is important in a reflexive study such as this, a reflexive account is provided in Appendix 1.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is structured in the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides the background to the study, aim, objectives, research questions, scope and methodological steps, the justification for the study and the overall structure to the thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter presents a critical review of the knowledge base related to the changing shape of doctoral study in the UK, in order to contextualise the study. Furthermore, it presents the factors impacting timely completion of doctoral study that have been presented in the global literature and highlights the gaps in knowledge on the reasons why this may be the case.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter outlines and justifies the research philosophy and strategy adopted in this research. It addresses the strengths and weaknesses of the methods chosen and those rejected for this study and evaluates the implications of these choices in terms of the practices adopted.

Chapter 4: Focus Group Findings

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion of the findings from the pre-study focus group, using thematic analysis.

Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis of Study Group 1 (Timely Completers)

This chapter presents the IPA of five doctoral holders that had completed their study within 52 months. The use of in-depth, semi-structured, narrative style interviews allows for exploration of their lived experiences of the PhD journey.

Chapter 6: Findings and Analysis of Study Group 2 (Late Completers)

This chapter presents the IPA of five doctoral holders that were late completers of their study. The use of in-depth, semi-structured, narrative style interviews allows for exploration of their lived experiences of the PhD journey.

Chapter 7: Comparative IPA of the Timely and Untimely Completers

This chapter draws out the differences and commonalities between the two study groups in a comparative interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter provides a summary of the overall study in relation to the major findings, followed by the conclusions drawn from the findings with respect to each objective being met. In addition, the contribution to knowledge is presented and the limitations of the current study and areas for future research are finally discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the thesis, a propos the aim and objectives of the study together with the outline content of the chapters. In this chapter, the current doctoral landscape is presented to locate and contextualise the thesis and then the pertinent literature relating to untimely completion of study is critically discussed to demonstrate the gaps in current secondary literature, in order to make an original contribution to knowledge.

2.2 Background

Doctoral study in the UK has changed profoundly over the last three decades, with different providers entering the HE market, different types of doctorate being awarded, different structures and mechanisms governing doctoral degrees, and different types of candidates embarking on doctoral degrees (McGloin & Wynne, 2015). Taylor (2012) outlines twelve concepts that have transformed doctoral study; these are massification, internationalisation, diversification, casualisation, dislocation, augmentation, commodification, McDonaldisation, regulation, cross-fertilisation, proliferation, and capitalisation (Taylor, 2012). Some of these are outlined below.

In terms of financial status of doctoral candidates, there are higher tuition fees than any generation before, coupled with a difficult political and economic climate, making financial institutions more reluctant to lend money. In the UK, the subsequent reliance on student loans, has caused not only financial pressure for the student, but also an element of ‘commodification’ (Taylor, 2012) where students are effectively, customers. Student debt at postgraduate research (PGR) level has been identified as a potential barrier for many, particularly for home students (McGloin & Wynne, 2015) and numbers of home students have been declining. Doctoral

providers are facing difficult times, fewer 'traditional' students (i.e. home students with three A levels) entering undergraduate programmes mean that providers are either forced to cut costs, look at non-standard entry, or look to new international markets where possible. This has an impact on master level degrees and, consequently, the number of what could be described as 'traditional' doctoral candidates. This institutional evolution, from accepting only the elite privileged minority, to widening participation to include all types of students, has had socio-economic consequences, that Taylor (2012) terms 'diversification' with universities now being significant contributors to the economy (Kearney & Lincoln, 2017).

Simultaneously, changes in the HE sector mean that doctorates and publications are more important than ever before in securing positions in academia, as fewer academic lectureships combined with higher numbers of applicants mean competition from both sides. For all sections of academia, therefore, the relative importance of doctorates has increased significantly (McGloin & Wynne, 2015).

In addition to this, the increase of international doctoral candidates has increased significantly over the last ten years, since many prospective doctoral candidates are prepared to move outside of their own country for study, and the market for doctorates is therefore global. The prestige of a doctorate from a western university combined with the opportunity to become proficient in English is an attractive proposition for prospective doctoral candidates and some European countries offering English language programmes have also entered the market (Elliot et al., 2017).

In the UK, completion rates of doctoral studies are published showing individual HEI performance, so that HEIs and prospective students can assess doctoral completion statistics

against competitors. This has caused institutions to attempt to shorten the time taken for a doctorate to be completed, such as having a very structured timeframe, with some providers pushing candidates to complete in three years or less. This 'McDonaldisation' (Taylor, 2012) means that more degrees are 'churned out' in a standardised way. In October 2012, after an eight-month independent enquiry into UK postgraduate study, the Higher Education Commission published findings relating to UK postgraduate education (HEC, 2019). The inquiry focused solely on UK postgraduate study, which, at that time, the HEC claimed to be an area of education which had been neglected, in terms of policy debate and strategic thinking. In 2012, the HEC claimed that the UK seemed to be 'unwelcoming' to international students, given the structures and constant changes to immigration in terms of the UKVI requirements, yet these students were 'plugging the gap' in many HEIs by compensating for loss of more 'traditional' candidates (HEC, 2019). In 2010, the UK government commissioned Elsevier to assess the performance of the UK research base and they found the UK to be leading in terms of research and output (Elsevier, 2019). However, it also noted some areas of weakness in terms of global spending and declining share of researchers. Unfortunately, despite dramatic changes in the HE sector, this situation remains unresolved, and the impact of Brexit could also impact European students entering the UK higher education sector (Elliot et al., 2017). Dr Rob Daley, Chair of the Postgraduate Student Experience group of the UK Council for Graduate Education, gave a keynote presentation at a workshop funded by the ESRC Impact Acceleration Account, conducted in Glasgow in March 2017 (Elliot et al., 2017). In this keynote, Daley explored the possibilities for enhancing international PhD students' experience, in order to attempt to make the UK a more attractive proposition for international students. Daley presented data from the PRES (Postgraduate Research Experience Survey), which is conducted annually on behalf of Advance HE (previously HEA) to gather data on how research students perceive their study experience. It was developed in consultation with the HE sector

and looks at what motivated students to enrol on their research degree, as well as the perceived quality of supervision, the resources available and research community, progression and professional skills gained on the research degree. Daley explained that the results show an overall satisfaction in international students when thinking about their experience, but that there are considerations for support, for the individual students, and with regard to supervisory practice.

However, despite the overall satisfaction reported by international PhD students, high rates of attrition and slow progress remain, Elliot et al., (2017) argue, and posit that the issues of attrition and delays could be exacerbated for international students, with acculturation problems and 'likely…other contributory factors' leading to untimely completion of study.

Completion of doctoral study in a timely manner is crucial to all stakeholders, not only to candidates navigating their careers in the current political and economic climate, but also to supervisors who cite PhD completions as an indicator of quality and success; to UK HEIs who have completion statistics published, and to the wider UK economy. In the last five years, organisations such as Vitae and UKCGE have focused attention on this problem, and there have been improvements in awareness of the importance of the pastoral care of doctoral candidates and 'research-related activities' (Elliot et al., 2017), together with the well documented importance of the supervisor relationship (Lee, 2012; Taylor, 2012; Elliot et al., 2016; Park, 2005; Delamont et al., 2000). However, there is still a data lacuna in terms of *why* some groups (such as some non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates) take longer to complete their doctorate than others.

The body of literature reviewed here has therefore developed over the whole course of study, as interest in the field of doctoral study has generally gained more attention. For this reason, the specifics of this iterative study mean that the literature reviewed is, necessarily, wide-ranging. For example, an EBSCOhost database search (most recently conducted 8th February 2019), revealed the limited results of the keywords as shown in Table 2.1. All of the major databases (33 from medicine, psychology, education, and sociology) were included in the search, and although it does not include book publications, it does include all peer-reviewed publications between 1935 and 2019.

Table 2.1 EBSCOhost Database Search

Search Term 1	Add Search Term 2	Add Search Term 3	Add Search Term 4	Result
International students*	-	-	-	58,966
International students*	Doctoral students*	-	-	809
International students*	Doctoral students*	Barriers / Challenges*	-	284
International students*	Doctoral students*	Barriers / Challenges*	Completion of Study	1*

* International students or foreign students or overseas students

* Doctoral students or PhD students or doctorate or doctoral

* Barriers / Challenges or difficulties or issues or problems or limitations or obstacles

* 1 study found: Elliot et al., (2016)

Note: Book publications do not appear in searches; the closest match in book publications was from Lee et al (2013).

The next part of the thesis provides a broad review of the current doctoral landscape in the UK from both empirical and grey literature, in order to set the context of the study, and then goes on to examine the reasons put forward in the current literature, much of which comes from 'reductionist' or quantitative studies, for untimely completion of doctoral study.

2.3 Current UK Doctoral Landscape

UK doctoral degrees have undergone significant changes over the last thirty years; in terms of awarding bodies, structure of programmes, quality of provision and supervision, and increased numbers and types of candidates. There has been a move away from the 'secret garden' approach described by Park (2005), whereby doctoral candidates were supervised in a private relationship with little interference from anybody else, to a much more visible PhD process, with quality of supervision being monitored (Taylor, 2012). UK doctoral degrees are now more tightly monitored and regulated, and some of the stakeholders in this process will now be discussed. Doctoral degrees are awarded by HEIs, which are regulated and monitored by several groups and bodies with an interest in doctoral education. The governance and regulation of doctoral degrees from a policy and governance viewpoint are: Advance HE (since March 2018), the Office for Students (previously HEFCE), RAE/REF, HEC, UKRI, HESA, QAA, UKCGE, and Vitae. Their roles in the context of doctoral education will now be explained.

2.3.1 Governance and Regulation

Advance HE came into being in March 2018 through the merger of three previously separate groups: the HEA, the Leadership Foundation for HE, and the Equality Challenge Unit. Their purpose is to advance professional practice in Higher Education in order to improve outcomes for all stakeholders, including students, staff and society (AdvanceHE, 2019).

The Office for Students (OfS) is an independent, non-departmental public body of the Department for Education. It has been the new regulator of higher education in England since January 2018, when it replaced HEFCE, which had been the regulatory body since 1992. The primary aim of the OfS is to 'ensure that English higher education is delivering positive outcomes for students' and seeks to ensure that students from all backgrounds are included in the sector (OfS, 2019). The four primary regulatory objectives are:

1. Students are supported to access, succeed in, and progress from, higher education.
2. Students receive a high-quality academic experience, and their interests are protected while they study or in the event of closure of provider.
3. Students are able to progress into employment or further study and that qualifications hold their value.
4. Students receive value for money.

The regulatory framework is designed to mitigate against these objectives not being met. The OfS also manage the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) introduced by the government in 2017. Each academic year, approximately £7 billion is distributed to English universities and colleges of higher education (UKRI, 2019). Research funding is calculated based on quality, volume and relative cost of research in different areas, as well as other allocations being made to contribute to research, including funding for research degree programme supervision, which is based on student numbers. The HEFCE research funding allocation for 2010-11 was informed by the outcomes of the 2008 RAE, a system which assessed the quality of research produced in each HEI. Note that HEFCE has now been replaced by the OfS (OfS, 2019). The REF replaced the RAE system in 2014, and this is a peer-review exercise which determines the distribution of the selective elements of public funding for research. There were concerns expressed about the effect of REF on completion of doctoral study, since doctoral candidates

are strongly encouraged to publish papers from the early stages of their research, and this could potentially divert attention from the doctorate itself (HEC, 2019). For HEIs that benefit most from research funding, a strong performance in REF is crucial to their success, and the HEC (2019) argue that this compounds the 'publish or perish' problem.

The RCUK was replaced by the UKRI in 2018. It is a strategic partnership between the UK's seven research councils, Innovate UK and Research England (UKRI, 2019). Approximately seven billion pounds are invested every year by the UKRI across all of the academic disciplines. The impact of the funding which UKRI invests is felt by the economy and society at large.

The Higher Education Commission (HEC, 2019) is an independent body made up of leaders from the education sector, the business community and the three major political parties. Established in response to demand from parliamentarians for a more informed and reflective discourse on higher education issues, the Commission examines higher education policy, holds evidence-based inquiries, and produces written reports with recommendations for policymakers.

The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) is the official agency for the collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative information about higher education. It was set up by government departments, HEFCE and universities and colleges in 1993, following the White Paper "Higher Education: a new framework", which called for more coherence in HE statistics, and the 1992 Higher and Further Education Acts, which established an integrated higher education system throughout the United Kingdom (HESA, 2019).

The quality of higher education in the UK is monitored and controlled by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), founded in 1997. The QAA publish guidelines to help institutions to develop effective strategies to enhance the quality of the student experience. QAA is an independent body and registered charity funded by subscriptions from universities and colleges of higher education, and through contracts with the main higher education funding bodies. Whilst it is the individual HEI's responsibility to maintain standards, the QAA safeguard these standards to ensure that quality is being maintained, prior to 2016 through institutional audits, in order to ensure that students, wherever they are in the world, get the educational experience they are entitled to (QAA, 2019). The QAA definitions of what doctoral candidates must achieve are provided in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (QAA, 2020). Doctorates are traditionally awarded for the creation and interpretation of knowledge, which extends the forefront of a discipline, through original research. Doctoral students are expected to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems, and also to have a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic inquiry. Typically, holders of a PhD must be able to make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.

The UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) was founded in 1994 under the Chair-ship of Professor Robert Burgess, with the purpose of championing the interests of graduate education. It was granted Charitable Status in 1997 by the Charity Commission for England and Wales. UKCGE is a Non for Profit (NFP) organisation and this enables them to drive development in postgraduate education, as well as being an authoritative voice on the HE sector in general. This means that UKCGE help in the production of policy in postgraduate education

and provide information, services and publications relating to postgraduate education (UKCGE, 2019).

Vitae is an organisation that 'champions' researchers in the UK. It provides help, support, and resources to researchers, and is concerned with the personal, professional and career development of doctoral researchers particularly. The organisation brings together all the stakeholders in realising the potential of researchers, establishing strategic partnerships between experts, policy makers, employers and those working with researchers to develop policy and practice (Vitae, 2019).

2.3.2 UK Doctoral Completion Rates

This section of the literature review assesses the current volume of doctoral study and trends of completion statistics for doctoral students in the UK. The first comprehensive report of UK doctoral completion came in January 2005, when HEFCE published a report on entry and completion, and considered factors such as mode of study, funding arrangements, whether from the UK or overseas, age and subject studied (HEFCE, 2005/02). In 2002-03, 26,900 candidates registered for doctoral education across all modes and types of doctoral programmes, and this number rose to 30,735 in 2008-09; a 14% increase. In 2010, HEFCE published the results of the 2008-2009 completion rates for UK higher education institutions and this report identified new universities as having low completion rates compared to other UK universities (HEFCE, 2010). National figures for full time students were published in a HEFCE report (July 2010/21) and these show qualification rates for doctoral programmes in each English institution (n.b. HEFCE use the term 'qualification rate' as opposed to 'completion rate'). These figures were set against a benchmark figure for that HEI, which is a sector adjusted average after taking

account of the impact of variations of subject mix and proportions of students receiving funding support from a research council (these factors are considered to impact most on completion). The rates were calculated from data submitted by HEIs to HESA. Full time student qualification rates were calculated as completing after 7 years, and so the figures shown below are for students starting in 2000 and completing in 2007 etc.

Table 2.2 Research Degree Qualification Rates for Full Time Home and EC Students

	Total Starters	Total Qualifiers	National Qualification Rate %	University of Salford Qualification Rate %	University of Salford Benchmark %
Start 2000-01 (2006-07)	7916	6320	80	39	75
Start 2001-02 (2007-08)	7576	6097	80	75	80
Start 2002-03 (2008-09)	7898	6297	80	45	75

Therefore, as can be seen above, research degree qualification rates for full time home and EC students starting their programme in 2000-01 show that the University of Salford had a qualification rate of 39% against a benchmark of 75% and against a qualification rate of 80% for all English institutions. The figures increased significantly for the 2001-02 cohort, with 75% qualifying against an 80% benchmark and 80% for all English institutions. For the 2002-03 cohort, the figures fell back again to 45% for Salford qualifiers against a benchmark of 75% and 80% for all English institutions.

Table 2.3 Research Degree Qualification Rates for Full Time Overseas Students

	Total Starters	Total Qualifiers	National Qualification Rate %	University of Salford Qualification Rate %	University of Salford Benchmark %
Start 2000-01 (2006-07)	3771	2855	76	54	74
Start 2001-02 (2007-08)	4091	3045	74	55	72
Start 2002-03 (2008-09)	4448	3312	74	49	73

As can be seen above, for full-time overseas students starting their programme in 2000-01, the University of Salford had a 54% qualification rate, against a benchmark of 74% and 76% for all English institutions. Despite the fact that overseas students had a higher qualification rate (54%) than home and EC students (39%), overseas students were chosen as the topic of interest for this study due to the particular barriers that this group may or may not encounter. The figures for overseas students increased slightly for the 2001-02 cohort, with 55% against a benchmark of 72%, and 74% for all English institutions. For the 2002-03 cohort, Salford had a 49% qualification rate, against a benchmark of 73% and 74% for all English HEIs.

The loss of doctoral candidates is not only a personal loss and bad experience for the individual concerned, it is a loss to the university in terms of funding, league tables and thus, reputation; to the wider academic community, and ultimately to the economy in terms of the opportunity cost of untimely or non-completion (Tan & Meijer, 2001). It is therefore in everybody's interest to try to understand not only what the reasons for untimely completion may be, but why this may be the case. That is to say, that the government, funding bodies, other HE sector organisations and policy makers are all stakeholders in the issue of low doctoral completions because of the potential consequential effect on the national economy. Whilst the Harris Committee (1996), the Roberts Report (2002), the Codes of Practice published by the QAA, the work of VITAE, EURODOC, HEFCE and UKCGE have gone a long way to raise standards

in the ‘quality’ of doctoral education, it could be argued that there remains some inconsistency in the quality and provision of doctoral education in the UK.

A letter to the Times Higher in 2011 argued that there is conflict between completion rates and the marketisation of, and competition in higher education (Ipofen, 2011). It argued that postgraduate research is a marketable service and that the metrics used must incorporate starting level against outcomes, as well as assessing the external pressures on postgraduate researchers. Possibly due to such marketisation, numbers of doctoral candidates have been growing steadily over the last decade, along with the growing number of options for mode of doctoral education. In the UK in 2002-03, 26,900 candidates registered for doctoral education across all modes and types of doctoral programmes, and this number rose to 30,735 in 2008-09; a 14% increase (HEFCE, 2010). In the UK in 2015/16, 56% of doctorates were awarded to UK (Home) students, and 44% to students from overseas, demonstrating the importance of internationalisation (Elliot et al., 2017).

The problem of untimely completion of doctoral study is compounded by the current political instability in the UK and US and by the economic climate. Resources are becoming scarcer in the UK higher education sector, and this is forcing HEIs to make difficult decisions, as more has to be achieved with less. HEIs are therefore being squeezed from both sides: to accept greater numbers of doctoral candidates, and for them to progress and complete in a timely manner: the age-old quality versus quantity argument (Park, 2005). Given that completion statistics are available in the public domain, not only do individual HEIs scrutinise the data to see their relative position, but potential students can assess their likely chances of success at various HEIs and this information could therefore, inform their choice of HEI. In other words,

untimely completion of doctoral study could impact not only on league tables, but also on reputation and ultimately, funding. Many HEIs now include taught elements (according to debate at UKCGE and Vitae events) in an attempt to add value to candidates, much like the American model. The UK is currently seen as the leader in the European market for skills development and training of doctoral candidates (UKCGE, 2019) and different modes of delivery are seen as the panacea to the problem of untimely completion rates.

Tighter progression monitoring and management is becoming more commonplace in UK HEIs, and some are adopting specifically developed software packages to monitor doctoral candidates' progress, and systems such as 'traffic lights' are common in many HEIs. Park (2005) discusses the inevitable tension between the quality of research and the completion time. He claims that this 'managerialist approach' and performance indicators of academic quality could be misrepresented and misinterpreted. Wingfield (2010) disputes that the focus on completion is about number of years of study; but claims that the 10,000 hour rule applies for doctoral candidates – that if the students spends 10,000 hours on the PhD, then there will be a sufficient body of knowledge to earn the PhD qualification. This equates to over 64 hours per week, over 52 weeks, for three-year completion. Given that full time work in the UK (40 hours per week) over 48 weeks (allowing 4 weeks' holiday – made up of 12 days plus 8 bank holidays) produces 1920 hours per annum, it would take over 5 years to complete, full time.

The QAA states that doctorates are traditionally awarded for the creation and interpretation of knowledge, which extends the forefront of a discipline, through original research. Doctoral students are expected to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems; and have a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic inquiry. Typically, holders of a PhD must be able to make informed judgements on complex issues in

specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences (QAA, 2011). Park (2005) argues that potential employers and funding bodies require more structured, compulsory, broader, more appropriate research training of doctoral candidates, as not all successful candidates go on to a career in academia.

2.3.3 Doctoral Providers in the UK

Higher Education Institutions in the UK fall into four broad categories; namely, Russell Group universities, ancient universities, plate glass universities, and new or modern universities. Recently, Doctoral Training Centres, or Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs) have emerged as another provider of doctoral education. The Russell Group universities in the UK are those considered to produce the very best research and which provide an outstanding teaching and learning experience, combined with strong links to public and private sector companies (Russell Group, 2019). The Russell Group represents the twenty-four most research intensive HEIs in the UK, and these HEIs produce globally accredited research as well as contributing to their local economies. This huge diversity of activity also contributes to the national economy; in 2019, Russell Group universities generated £86.8 billion for the UK economy (Russell Group, 2019). The UK's very best research takes place in Russell Group universities, and on average, twice as much of the research undertaken at Russell Group universities is 'world leading' compared to the rest of the sector (Russell Group, 2019). This could be attributed to their nature as research leading institutions and means that there is a likelihood that PGRs have a supervisory team made up of successful researchers in their field.

The quality of the postgraduate programmes offered by Russell Group universities is closely related to their world-class research. They bring together a critical mass of research activity in

a range of subjects with the potential for cross-disciplinary links and inspiration. Russell Group universities attract global attention because of the high profile, high quality research which is produced by high calibre candidates. Unsurprisingly therefore, doctoral completion rates for full time home and EC students studying in Russell Group Universities are high compared to non-Russell Group Universities. For example, Oxford and Cambridge have doctoral completion rates of 83% and 86%, respectively (HEFCE 2010/21). Oxford and Cambridge are part of the Russell Group Universities and are considered to be ancient universities, since they were founded in the medieval and renaissance period. There are seven still-existent British and Irish medieval and renaissance universities and these are amongst the oldest universities in the world. They comprise: Oxford, Cambridge, St Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Dublin. Plate glass universities refer to any of the several UK universities founded in the 1960s, in the era of the Robbins Report on higher education. The University of Salford is considered a plate glass university, as in February 1967, Her Majesty the Queen handed over the Royal Charter to the Royal College of Advanced Technology, and it became the University of Salford (University of Salford, 2019). Modern or new universities are considered to be HEIs that were formed or granted university status post 1992, and many are former polytechnics or colleges of higher education. Doctoral Training Centres or Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs) have recently emerged as a new type of provider for doctoral degrees, and these centres are often funded by research councils such as EPSRC. The centres bring together diverse areas of expertise in a supportive environment and encourage collaborative work with employers and industry.

2.3.4 Structure of the UK Doctorate

During the last three decades, the structure of UK doctoral degrees has changed significantly, away from the Humboldtian master-apprentice model (McGloin & Wynne, 2015). Many doctorates now include more structured components, more taught elements, more blended learning (with online components) and more focus on the quality of the PhD (in terms of research training), rather than the product (the final thesis). Roberts funding (2002) initiated part of this transition, and because the needs of a diverse population meant that the 'traditional route' PhD did not match expectations or need, there was a need for a more structured doctorate (McGloin & Wynne, 2015). There has also been an increase in debate about PhD time at UKCGE and Vitae events, both in terms of completion and in terms of funded studentships being shortened to an average of 3.5 years. In contrast to scientific PhDs, doctoral degrees being offered in Doctoral Training Centres are usually four years in length, to allow for a broader area of study. There is an argument about the purpose and value of the PhD, in terms of the depth versus breadth argument, for example, Bryan & Guccione (2018) examined the perceptions of doctoral graduates regarding their attachment of personal value, social value, skills value and career value. Previously, the HEC (2019) inquiry presented an argument about the traditional route PhD being too narrow and that employability of doctoral graduates created demand for a wide range of skills required for the workplace. In addition, the UKCGE (2019) argued that doctoral study is an academic apprenticeship combined with an opportunity to make a substantial contribution to knowledge about a very particular area of interest. UKCGE (2019) stated that certain jobs require high level critical thinking skills, yet the inquiry (HEC, 2019) found that the traditional route PhD was not even suitable for a career in academia, since newly qualified graduates were unable to 'teach' even at undergraduate level because they do not have the broad subject knowledge required. Similar arguments have led to the creation of new

routes of doctoral study, such as the professional doctorate, and, to some extent, informed the development of Doctoral Training Centres and Roberts funding for transferable skills training.

Table 2.4 Types of PhD and Usual Length of Study

Programme of Study	Programme Duration	Writing Up Period
Traditional Route Full Time	3 years	1 year
Traditional Route Part Time	5 years	2 years
Split Site	4 years	1 year
On Line (Internet Enabled)	3 years	1 year
Professional Doctorate	3 to 5 years	N/A

2.3.5 International Doctoral Students

In the last two decades particularly, internationalisation has driven higher education as the doctoral student population has become increasingly diverse (Kearney & Lincoln, 2017), with students travelling outside of their home country for their doctoral education, as the opportunity is seen as an 'enriching and challenging experience for students emanating from their immersion in different academic and societal contexts' (Elliot & Kobayashi, 2018, p2). The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA), a charity and membership organisation that supports international students, states that in 2016, 48% of full-time postgraduate research students were international (http://www.ukcisa.org.uk), since the UK still holds a prestigious reputation globally for postgraduate education; and the international education industry in the UK market for doctorates is significant, at £13.6 billion.

The metaphor of a ‘PhD journey’ is particularly apposite for international doctoral candidates, that have left their home country and embarked on a doctoral programme in a foreign country (Evans & Liou, 2011). Liou (a Taiwanese academic working in Australia) explained the increased importance of ‘waypoints’ to international candidates, advocating a more structured approach so that students are able to navigate and ultimately complete their study in a timely manner. This case study article was based on the experiences of the authors – Evans as an Australian and Liou as Taiwanese, and as such the findings cannot be generalised to other contexts, although there may be commonalities with international students in the UK.

A grounded theory study, conducted in Iran with 31 doctoral candidates and 9 academic staff, highlighted the importance of the learning environment in forming the sociocultural construct, stating that people were affected by different factors at the personal, interpersonal, organisational and macro levels (Hemmati & Mahdie, 2020).

In the UK, international doctoral candidates pay approximately three times the amount that home/EC students pay in fees, and their numbers have risen dramatically over the last decade, so that they represent 30% of the total number of doctoral candidates (McGloin & Wynne, 2015). However, international students can pose many problems for institutions, as was pointed out in a letter to the Times Higher in 2011 (Ipofen, 2011), which argued that whilst overseas students can be lucrative sources of income for universities, they can also make disproportionately higher demands on supervisors (Times Higher, 2011). This is an argument shared by Elliot & Kobayashi (2018) where they state that given the time commitment and investment required for international doctoral candidates to reach their full potential, against a backdrop of high attrition rates, each completion should lead to great celebration for both the

supervisor and the student. Despite the need for the increased investment (in international students) by all stakeholders in the PhD journey, the discourse around the inclusion of students in the immigration cap and more recently, the potential impact of Brexit, has led to a damaging perception that the UK does not welcome international students and is contributing to a climate of uncertainty for prospective and current international students (HEC, 2019). This is particularly worrying for HEIs that depend on international students, such as the University of Salford. The entry requirements to UK HEIs could also discourage prospective doctoral candidates to study in the UK; many HEIs require a good Bachelor and Master degree together with a minimum standard of English language. This is compared to other countries such as Germany, where PhD students enjoy relative freedom, as there are few rules governing their study. Entry requirements are limited to having a first degree and a good idea to support a PhD thesis (Von Aichberger, 2001), rather than having a postgraduate degree as in the UK.

In some countries, such as The Netherlands and Denmark, PhD students are employees of the university and are often given a small salary and health insurance (Fischer & Lohner, 2001; Elliot & Kobayashi, 2018). Each PhD student is required to have an individualised education plan and can attend training sessions in English and research methods. In return, the PhD student has a teaching commitment in the university to enhance their own learning. Similar schemes exist in the UK, such as Graduate Teaching Assistant roles, where the PhD candidate teaches on Bachelor degree programmes for around 6 hours per week and has their tuition fees paid in return. However, the PRES survey of 2017 highlighted the disparity between English native speakers and non-native English-speakers in taking up these kinds of positions, with only 42% of non-EU candidates doing any teaching at all.

In order for a potential PhD candidate to study in the UK, a Tier 4 Visa is required, and this is only issued if the student has met the minimum English language entry requirements; in addition, the minimum entry requirements may also be higher for some HEIs. Many UK HEIs require the candidate to have an internationally recognised English language qualification such as IELTS or TOEFL, with the ranges varying (dependent on the HEI), but typically being IELTS 5.5 to 7.5 or TOEFL 525-625 (http://ielts.org). The implications of this requirement are that many potential doctoral candidates that have not achieved the required levels of English language ability come to the UK to complete a pre-sessional English course, before their doctoral study.

2.4 Untimely Completion of Study

The completion rates of doctoral studies have been of concern in the UK since the mid-1980s, with inferences and suggestions made as to why this may be the case (Becher et al., 1994; Booth & Satchell, 1996; Lovitts, 2001; McCormack, 2005; Rudd, 1985; Wright & Cochrane, 2000). Almost two decades ago, in 2001, Lovitts stated that problems with completion of doctoral study were always a 'constellation' of reasons, but with more influence from institutional factors, rather than student characteristics. In 2009 in the US, Leichty et al. attributed doctoral success as 'multidetermined' from individual zones of current and potential development; capacity of more knowledgeable others to scaffold the student; and the capacity of the department to facilitate social contexts of learning. Another US based study, conducted in 2015 by Hwang et al. also acknowledged the multi-dimensional nature of the barriers to successful completion of doctoral study. This mixed methods study of 205 PhD students in a single institution in Texas found six themes that were prevalent in their sample. These were:

1. External obligations; such as family responsibilities, job, social life, and medical conditions.

2. Challenges at doctoral level; such as concerns and unforeseen issues in the research.
3. Practical and logistical constraints; such as time, financial and distance from campus.
4. Emotional concerns; such as anxiety, lack of motivation, burn-out and procrastination.
5. Programme structure; such as sequencing, comprehension, and inflexibility.
6. Lack of support for completion; such as a lack of connectedness and guidance.

Whilst acknowledging that the sample was made up of 205 doctoral candidates, making the study statistically significant, only 13% were non-native English speaking, and so the relevance of these data to the present study are limited.

With regard to international or non-native English-speaking candidates, Winchester-Seeto et al., (2014) cited the particular problems that these students encounter as 'intensifiers' in that issues such as 'language, cultural differences in dealing with hierarchy; separation from the familiar; separation from support; other cultural differences; stereotypes; time and what happens when [the student] returns home' can all impact on the international student's doctoral experience (Winchester-Seeto et al., 2014). This was also pointed out in a workshop presentation, 'Towards Maximising International PhD Students' Experience', conducted in Glasgow in March 2017 by Jisca van der Reest. As a Dutch third year PhD student, she reported cultural barriers such as the nuanced meaning of the English language, social barriers such as integrating with others, and administrative barriers such as navigating healthcare and financial support.

Elliot & Kobayashi (2018) conducted an IPA study to examine the different aspects of supervision in a 'foreign' context. Yet, this does not account for the fact that some international students may complete their doctoral degree on time, notwithstanding their similar demographic identity. It is arguable that these intrinsic reasons are more difficult to decipher,

thus the literature published to date, which it not of a reductionist nature, has been limited in this particular area of study.

Barriers to timely completion have been categorised by several authors as being from the policy perspective, the supervisor perspective and the student perspective. For example, in 1999, Morgan and Tam classified the influencing factors on timely completion of doctoral study as being institutional, supervisory, or reasons related to the student's characteristics. McCormack (2005) also categorises the factors influencing non-completion into three broad areas: institutional factors, supervisory arrangements, and personal factors. Similarly, Green & Powell (2005) point to four main reasons: individual, structural, academic and environmental. There are some widely accepted factors that are referred to in many sources. Pauley, Cunningham and Toth (1999; cited in Park 2005) identified six factors which impact on student completion in the US. These are support financially, family support, peer support, faculty support, supervisor (chairperson) support and student motivation. Similarly, in Australia, Dinham and Scott (1999), point to financial difficulties, family problems, cultural difficulties, isolation, and university administration as being the main factors which lead to untimely or non-completion. Rudd (1985) pointed out that students drop out for a variety of reasons: individual characteristics, personal problems and accidents, problems inherent in research projects and poor supervision. This suggests that the problem lies with the student's choice of topic in the first place, a view shared by Phillips and Pugh (2010) who argue that one reason for not completing is due to not having a proper thesis or position to argue. In 2011, HEFCE identified several reasons (at undergraduate level) why students may not complete their study. These reasons include the student being less prepared for the level of study, having other personal circumstances that conflict with study, or because the institution does not do enough to support their students through to completion.

Phillips and Pugh (2010) listed, in their influential book, eight ways of 'not getting a PhD', which include the following:

1. Not wanting a PhD
2. Overestimating what is required
3. Underestimating what is required
4. Having a supervisor who does not know what is required
5. Losing contact with your supervisor
6. Not being in a research environment
7. Not having a 'thesis' (as in position or argument) to maintain
8. Taking a new job before completing

The reasons put forward by Phillips and Pugh, are, therefore, student centric and within the student's control; they argue that students may find themselves on a track of the PhD without really paying attention to the reality of the length of study and the demands made upon them (Phillips & Pugh, 2010).

A mixed methods study conducted by Wao & Onwuegbuzie (2011) found that the factors affecting time taken to complete the doctorate 'are intertwined and involve a complex interplay of institutional and personal factors' (Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011, p131). However, the qualitative aspect of this US based study was limited to interviewing four students and conducting two focus groups with four staff in each group. The quantitative data for the study were taken from 1028 student records that had completed between 1990 and 2006. There was some agreement with previous studies, such as Lovitts (2001) although the importance of relative factors was in contrast to Lovitts' work.

2.5 Personal Drive to Complete the Doctoral Study

The pursuit of a doctoral degree requires a strong initial motivation followed by persistence and a level of self-determination to complete the study. Porter (in Lee et al., 2013) describes doctoral candidates as choosing to study for many reasons, including a burning desire to investigate a phenomenon, yet whatever the motivation, the levels of expectations of where the journey is likely to go vary enormously. In a keynote speech at a student-led conference held at the University of Bath in June 2012, Porter used the analogy of the journey in Pilgrims Progress as being like the doctoral journey, with the student being burdened by a great weight and facing many challenges along the way. The motivation to push though these challenges is the focus of the next section.

2.5.1 Motivation to Complete Doctoral Study

Motivation is an activation, an incentive or a reason to behave in a particular way (Antonides & Raaij, 1998). It is a central concept in psychology, and as such, it is of interest in relation to academic success. There are many different levels of motivation, as well as different orientations (Deci & Ryan, 2010) and this may result in different 'strengths' of motivation and therefore how this may affect completion of doctoral study.

The basic human needs of existence also affect timely completion of doctoral study, since candidates are often in the life stage where they are away from their parents and sometimes have families of their own to support. This is especially the case for international doctoral candidates, who are more than likely to be away from their families (Evans & Liou, 2011).

Maslow's widely cited Hierarchy of Needs, first published in 1943, identifies five levels in a 'hierarchy' that humans need for survival and development, this is shown below.

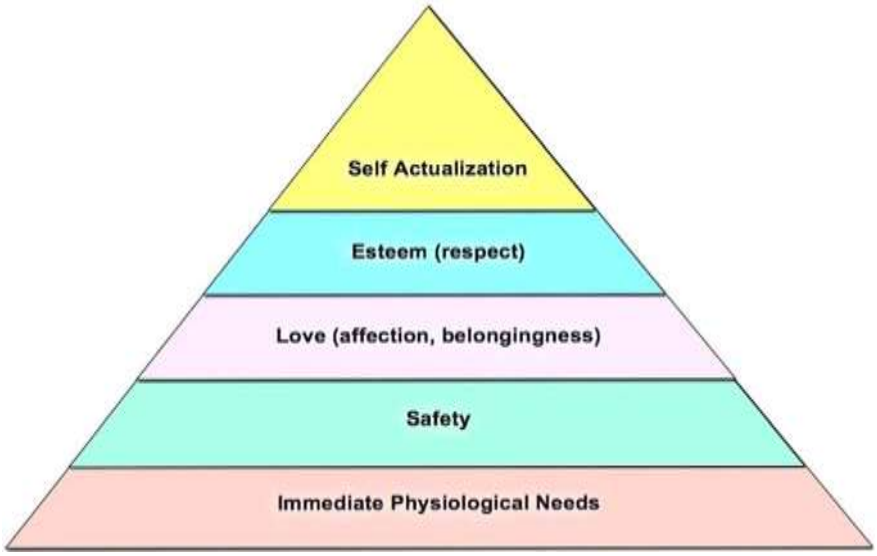


Figure 2.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (modified from Kenrick et al., 2010)

On the lowest level of the pyramid are the basic instincts, the innate human drivers, such as hunger, thirst, and sexuality, as being the most basic of human physiological needs. These factors, combined with security and shelter, are part of the human need for existence. The third level relates to affiliation and love, and so is concerned with relationships. The top two levels are concerned with growth: Recognition and esteem form the fourth level, and self-realisation forms the top of the pyramid. The needs are ordered in successive levels; the basic needs must be fulfilled before the individual can aspire to fulfil higher needs. This is of relevance to the study since many doctoral candidates feel that their basic needs are not being met, and may find it difficult to concentrate on their 'higher level' needs, such as studying for a doctorate. Denicolo et al., (2018) recommend small rewards to oneself when motivation wanes, or doing a different activity altogether for a while. Another strategy that they recommend is to work on a different section of the thesis that may not need as much 'brain power' as others (Denicolo et al., 2018).

Fischer & Lohner (2001) point to the lack of employment prospects as a demotivating factor to timely completion, suggesting that often PhD graduates are too old to start a university career and too overqualified for anything else. Being categorised as a student is a more acceptable status and thus an attractive alternative, despite being in a state of limbo.

Motivation has been widely studied in relation to general education (Deci & Ryan, 2010) and the distinctions between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have also been widely addressed. However, studies on the motivations to complete a PhD study from an international student perspective are not well articulated. Motivation refers to a state whereby the individual is moved to act. Consequently, people may feel inspired or moved to behave in a certain way and people who are highly motivated or energized toward an end are considered as highly motivated. Equally, those who display little impetus or inspiration to act are viewed as unmotivated (or amotivated). Students in higher education may be motivated in different ways and by different things. Many theories of motivation view the construct as a unitary phenomenon; this is to be argued since individuals may vary in the level of motivation and the orientation of that motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2010). Intrinsically motivated behaviours are those that are engaged with for their own sake, leading to the individual innately enjoying the action (Deci et al, 1991) and extrinsic motivation is that which is considered as being important in order for a separate consequence to be applied. In terms of Higher Education, a student that reads for pleasure is intrinsically motivated to do so; a student that reads only the books on the reading list is extrinsically motivated to do so. Whilst intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were initially seen as contrasting (with self-determination theory being considered as an intrinsic motivation), the idea of extrinsic motivation can also lead to self-determination, depending on the level of ‘internalisation’ (Deci et al, 1991). Grover (2007) has written on the requirement

of a minimum threshold of motivation for successful completion of study, claiming that doctoral candidates must be 'willing and enthusiastic about engaging in the unstructured and often frustrating process of knowledge creation' (Grover, 2007, p 9). Grover's work includes a maturity cycle and a checklist for doctoral students at various stages of their degree, based on his previous work which identified 'mistakes' that students often make, causing the study to stall. There are two main limitations in relation to the present study; firstly, his essay was written in a US context at Clemson University and therefore some of the mistakes highlighted are context specific, such as completing the comprehensive exams. Secondly, there is no discussion of how international or non-native English-speaking students may fayre in relation to the points raised, making this study of limited relevance to the present thesis.

The link between motivation and completion of PhD study was highlighted by Tan & Meijer (2001). They identify the lack of appreciation as a factor in student drop out; if students do not feel that their work is appreciated, then they will lose self-esteem and this could potentially lead to dropping out. The idea of appreciation was identified by Deci et al (1991), using the word 'value' rather than appreciation. They posited that feelings of competence, relatedness (secure connections) and autonomy (being self-regulating) contribute to academic success.

People who are motivated tend to perform the task better than those who are not motivated, yet Reiss (2005) suggests that these distinctions, between intrinsic and extrinsic, should not be made. Reiss argues that a diverse range of human motivations cannot be automatically categorised as being intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. Some people may be motivated by competition, money and success, whilst others may be motivated by inner satisfaction.

Kearns & Gardiner (2011) point out that motivation for PhD study – a huge task with fuzzy deadlines, is different to the motivation for 'something you feel like doing' such as watching a film. In the case of a PhD student, Kearns & Gardiner suggest having small steps broken down into tiny steps, having a definite time set aside to complete the task and having an instant reward for completing the task, can all help the 'motivation fairy' to pay a visit. Denicolo et al., (2018) also recommend changing routines such as doing a different activity can help with motivation, and more attention paid to time management and prioritisation can help progression.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) claim that motivation for being in a foreign country to study is for a specific purpose and is 'instrumental' motivation, where the purpose of study reflects utilitarian values. Similarly, Nagata (in Ryan & Zuber-Skerritt, 1999) states that whilst some postgraduates are motivated by getting the qualification from the particular university, others may have family living with them, and feel more intrinsic motivations because they have a secure base in their home-life.

Improving understanding of the motivations behind students' decisions to enter postgraduate education is therefore of interest. The HEC Inquiry of 2012 argued that research should be undertaken to get a better understanding of the dynamics of this issue (HEC, 2019). Student motivation inevitably has peaks and troughs throughout the journey, but arguably if motivation wains early in the first year, it is unlikely to regain strength. Phillips and Pugh (2010) argued that 'not wanting a PhD' can be an inhibitor in student completion, and this occurs in the first few months of study when the student realises the amount of work needed. Although it may sound obvious, Phillips and Pugh argued that many people embark on the PhD journey because 'they think it would be a nice idea', without any real conviction, and so after a few months, reality sets in. Porter (in Lee et al., 2013) uses the analogy of 'Pilgrim's Progress' to describe

the PhD journey, with many tribulations along the way. She points to the unpredictable path that the 'protagonist' must take with the inevitable obstacles along the way (Porter, in Lee et al., 2013).

2.5.2 Self-Determination and Persistence

The key difference between Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and other motivational theory is that SDT acknowledges that motivation can either be self-determined or can be intentionally regulated or controlled. When a behaviour is intentionally regulated or controlled, the regulatory process for the individual is that of compliance, whereas when the behaviour is self-determined, the regulatory process for the individual is that of choice (Deci et al, 1991). This is presented as a distinction of the classifications of motivation being either intrinsic or extrinsic, work which was further developed by Tremblay et al., (2009). In their quantitative study of work-related motivation, they supported SDT as being articulated on a continuum in order to predict 'optimal functioning' (Tremblay et al., 2009, p214). At one end of the scale is intrinsic motivation, which garners the most positive consequences; and at the other extreme is amotivation, which results in the most negative consequences, such as withdrawal. The limitation of this study in light of the present thesis is twofold: firstly, the study was conducted with employees, rather than students, and secondly, the study relied on self-reporting from employees in a work environment, and this could have skewed the results. Nevertheless, the study does provide some support for the SDT in terms of its linkage with consequences and experiences, and these could be potentially relevant in doctoral completion.

SDT may also have an impact on how recently completed doctoral candidates could reflect on their experiences. This theory relates to social context which satisfy three basic innate

psychological needs of ‘competence’ (enabled by interpersonal events and structures during the action, ‘autonomy’ in their behaviour being self-determined, and ‘relatedness’ in terms of being authentically associated with others (Deci & Ryan, 2010). In Deci et al (1991) the concept of self-determination was first explored in relation to school education (in children up to the age of 20). The study focused on how to embed a natural interest in learning and to achieve confidence in students’ own abilities, which are the manifestations of being intrinsically motivated to learn. Deci et al (1991) also discuss the socio-contextual factors that affect the individual’s educational outcomes, such as the relationship between teacher and student, an argument supported by Elliot & Kobayashi (2018). In their qualitative study, the supervisors interviewed expressed the need for doctoral students to become ‘self-regulated learners’ but often this is hindered by students’ inability to culturally adapt, for example, in their comfort with different styles of supervision. However, in contrast to this argument, Deci et al., (1991) state that in tightly controlled environments, where the individual may feel they have limited choices available, there may be a loss in motivation; whereas students that are more intrinsically motivated to perform academic tasks (with good self-regulation) are more likely to demonstrate stronger conceptual understanding and consequently appear more self-determined. In other words, Deci et al., (1991) argued that performance is optimised in contexts that provide people the opportunity to satisfy their own psychological need for autonomy, and thus self-regulation. Whether or not this is the case for non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates, where they may be more comfortable with clearly defined goals being set, has not been documented in the literature.

The multi-dimensional nature of doctoral completion is therefore complex; it is associated with various personal characteristics such as aptitude, aspiration, family, work, financial status, and background (Hwang et al., 2015) and this leads to the lack of any generalised model of doctoral

persistence throughout the journey. However, in Hwang et al., (2015), the theoretical framework adopted included the work of Tinto (1993). Tinto's persistence theory in doctoral education was an extension of his previous work with undergraduate students (1975) on the interactions in the academic environment to explain dropouts of undergraduate students. The 1993 work conceptualised a theoretical model for doctoral candidates with three phases – transitional, leading to candidacy and dissertation; and Tinto postulated several challenges that can be overcome in each phase, with persistence (Tinto, 1993; cited in Hwang et al., 2015).

Tinto's 1993 work on persistence and integration theory was also studied in Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw (2012). This qualitative study was conducted in the US with 76 participants who held earned doctorates, with the aim to examine persistence factors associated with the successful completion of a doctorate in education. The participants were interviewed with a standard set of open questions, including what the best part and hardest part of their study had been. The interviews were analysed thematically, and the authors found that whilst the participants had demonstrated persistence in completing their study, they had made personal sacrifices, had endured intervening life experiences and overcome dissertation challenges during the course of their study. Note that this study was conducted in the US, where doctoral candidates complete two years of structured classes before embarking on the 'dissertation' phase of the doctorate (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012).

It can be argued that doctoral candidates must possess what Denicolo et al., (2018) describe as 'grit' especially in the context of international candidates that are experiencing a different cultural environment in their doctoral education, with much more autonomous learning, leading to the requirement that students possess more self-discipline (Elliot & Kobayashi, 2018).

Denicolo et al., (2018) state that perseverance is an essential characteristic for research students; that having the tenacity to see the project through to the end demonstrates endurance, contending that students gain a doctorate by not giving up.

2.6 Self-Identity as a Doctoral Candidate

Doctoral degrees are transition points in the development of professional and personal identities, where confidence in articulation of stance grows along the journey, according to Denicolo et al., (2018). Self-identity can be described as being 'made up of meanings formed through interaction between beliefs, experience and thought, producing meaning and ultimately narrative about who we believe ourselves to be' (Douglas, cited in Lee et al., 2013, p 75). Douglas conducted ethnographic research as part of her PhD research on the identities of 16-year olds in their transition from special school to mainstream education at a further education college. She describes the renegotiation of self-beliefs that continuously evolve as an outcome of the relationship between social interactions and internal construction. Yet in the process of her study, she realised that her own identity had changed, and this was something she had not expected to happen. Her path had taken many detours and she reflected that no-one can accurately predict where the PhD will take them; they are only ever able to reflect on where they have been.

2.6.1 Identifying as a Student

The process of research can change the identity of the person, according to Douglas (in Lee et al., 2013). Douglas explains that during the course of her PhD journey, she had developed her knowledge not only in the subject matter under investigation, but also in terms of becoming more questioning, with a desire to 'delve deeper into the meanings of things' together with the impact on social context and her own worldview (Douglas cited in Lee et al., 2013, p 73).

Denicolo et al., (2018) also state that individuals change over the course of the doctorate, saying that ‘change is to be expected over any substantial period of adult life, however, the process of the doctorate drives an astonishing degree of personal and professional development (regardless of age), such that you truly will see yourself as a different person by the end of this degree’ (Denicolo et al., 2018, p 45).

Hockey (1994) discussed the change in status of a PhD student in their intellectual identity and their material status. A further study conducted by Hockey over a decade later, and with Allen-Collinson (2005) examined the change in identity of practice based doctoral students in art and design subjects. Fifty students were interviewed from twenty-five institutions across the UK, and their study found that students’ identities morphed from being an artist/designer at the outset of their study, to being an artist/designer-researcher at the end of the PhD journey. One of the problems cited was the difficulty in understanding both the technical and cognitive aspects of the PhD; the literary practices required in order to construct a thesis, to candidates that had not previously engaged in lengthy written work (Hockey and Allen-Collinson, 2005). It should be noted that since the time of this publication, in 2005, the growth in practice-based doctorates has been considerate, yet there is a paucity of literature into the experiences of such doctoral candidates, and indeed whether this perceived identity change is still the case. A study conducted by Elliot & Kobayashi (2018), which examined the cross-cultural facets of doctoral supervision in Denmark, found that international students’ expectations of learning experience are formed from their holistic understanding of their own society’s norms of educational practice, and thus the transition to being an international doctoral candidate can pose its own challenges. This was also highlighted as a critical issue in the ESRC Workshop (mentioned in section xx) in terms of students having a mismatch in expectations and assumptions from their supervisor (Elliot et al., 2017). Elliot & Kobayashi (2018) also refer to international students’

unwillingness to engage in what they may consider to be confrontational behaviours; yet robust conversations with the supervisor are sometimes necessary, but students may often feel inferior and subordinate to their supervisor; and so when conflicts arise, the weight of power means that decisions are often in favour of the supervisor (Tan & Meijer, 2001). Elliot et al., (2017) also highlight the inevitable reticence of international students in coming forward and openly discussing their research with their supervisor. They suggest that this may be due to cultural reasons, lack of confidence, perceived language barrier or power relations.

In summary, Marshall (in Lee et al., 2013) states that the PhD journey is about self-discovery; understanding one's own comfort zones and allowing these to be tested but not exceeded, so that the candidate feels challenged, but not to the extent that every aspect of life is affected.

2.6.2 Acculturation

International students often encounter 'acculturation', which is described as a process of adjusting to a non-native culture involving changes to every aspect of a person's life (Ye, 2006) and the more distant the new culture, the more likely students will face acculturative distress. The subject of acculturation was studied by Elliot et al (2016) in an interesting methodological approach using visual metaphors in the form of photographs. Using photographs to elicit deeper psychological responses has also been used by Watt & Wakefield (2014) and Wakefield & Watt (2014). Harper (2002) posits that photographs have the power to evoke deeper elements of consciousness, such as underlying feelings and emotions, a view shared by Rose (cited in Elliot et al., 2016). Elliot's IPA study was conducted at the University of Glasgow with non-British postdoctoral academics (Early Career Researchers). The fourteen participants were given disposable cameras and instructed to take up to twenty-four photographs that visually or

symbolically represented their experiences as an international PhD student in the UK; this could be anything that made a significant impression on the participant's lived experience. The purpose of the study was to understand the 'pedagogical, sociocultural and psychological related conceptions and challenges typically encountered by doctoral students' (Elliot et al, 2016, p483). The photographs served as a mechanism to prompt both discussion of the photograph in combination with the narrative response. The photographs ranged from university facilities and photos of the completed thesis, to hobbies and local areas, but the common theme was that acculturation, which Elliot et al., (2016) describe as the acquisition of appropriate learning behaviour in a new culture, was a challenge to all of the participants. A similar methodology, in terms of using photographs, although not using IPA, was in the PhD thesis of Reese (2014). His US based study used photo-elicitation to explore the student experiences of mid-career professionals; in other words, of doctoral candidates that had waited several years before embarking on the PhD. His findings showed similar themes to that of Elliot et al., (2016): what Reese described as the three C's of conflicted, commitment and community. He reported that his (native-speaking) mid-career doctoral candidates felt conflicted due to multiple, competing roles and issues with identity; that these students were highly committed to complete their study despite many emotional upheavals; and that their community of peers was most lacking.

In Elliot & Kobayashi (2018), an IPA study of the cross-cultural aspects of supervision, there is the posit that for international doctoral candidates, the endeavours of completing a PhD are far more than simply the academic achievement. They suggest there are a range of factors that can affect international students, which leads to the process of transformation of the whole person. Although this argument was presented in the light of results of a qualitative methodology, the argument itself is not new; in 2003, Yeh & Inose conducted a quantitative

study in the US, surveying 372 international students. The study found that not only age and gender, but also English fluency, social connectedness and social support networks all had significant contributions to acculturative distress. They advocated that university departments that welcome non-native English-speaking students should provide for community building projects, such as informal networks and activities where international students can work together. Another US based study, conducted in 2006, examined acculturative stress amongst 112 Chinese students enrolled at two large diverse universities in the south-eastern USA. The study used questionnaires to gather feelings about life in the US and concluded that there is a link between acculturative stress and social support (Ye, 2006). In Scotland, Zhou et al., (2008) studied cultural synergy using the ABC (affective, behavioural, cognitive) theoretical model to understand the processes involved for international students in overcoming culture shock when studying in a new country. The adaptation of student sojourners in a culture different from their own, in terms of the collective impact of educational and social contexts, can be overwhelming, resulting in culture shock. A mixed methods study conducted in four English universities, in 2009, also advocated that university authorities take 'an active and transformative approach' to minimise the limits of interculturality that international students may feel (Schweisfurth & Gu., 2009 p472). The study used a combination of questionnaires to 228 international undergraduates and then a follow up with 11 students as case studies.

Denicolo et al., (2018) point to the overwhelming positives that diversity brings to higher education, not least the different cultures, languages and customs that students bring. They argue that cultural background interacts with the professional and disciplinary cultures to make each unique individual's personal (self) identity.

The issue of gender and completion of doctoral study was discussed in Hwang et al., (2015) in their mixed methods study of 205 doctoral students in Texas, USA. Even though gender was not found to be a significant factor in completion of study, they highlight the unique challenges and barriers that female students may face, such as greater work demand, financial constraints, childcare responsibilities and low level of confidence. However, there should be caution applied here, as the sample of 205 students was made up of 60% female participants (n = 123) and the study was conducted in a single university. A further limitation is that the largely female sample may not have been comfortable in talking about gender issues, for fear of being seen as 'weak'. Brittan (1989) discusses the validity of gender identity, seeing identity as a socially constructed accomplishment (in men), which depends on the influences of both children and parents who, through their shared belief in the 'naturalness' of gender, together construct it into something giving it a sense of reality. Brittan (1989) argues that we learn our gender identity in the same way we learn how to swim. He also goes on to point out that different cultural realities exist and have done for centuries, yet gender identity is still entwined with emotional and political processes, affecting power play and making the person feel it is a very real phenomenon. Brittan's point is that in the process of socialisation, young males learn how to acquire their gender role; they acquire a masculine ideology which becomes a real part of them.

Another consideration is whether non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates, who have very particular needs, are supervised by those that have a cultural awareness, something Lee (2012) terms 'cultural competence.' According to Lee (2012), there are five categories of cultural competence, these are the functional activities (such as finding adequate language training); enculturation (to reduce acculturation distress); critical thinking (in terms of their ability to challenge); emancipation (being more supportive of career needs after completion); and social support (to enable the candidate to mix with others). These are depicted in Figure

2.1 below. This is also a view put forward in earlier work, by Leichty et al., (2009), who claim that the cultural and linguistic barriers to effective communication between the doctoral student and the supervisor can frustrate progress and change the relationship dynamic.

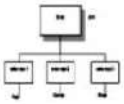
					
	Functional	**Enculturation**	**Critical Thinking**	**Emancipation**	**Relationship Development**
Supervisors' Activity relating to cultural competence	Will know where to find language support, use the international student office, how to use regulations on widening participation etc	Will make the tacit explicit Will encourage inclusion and welcome to the department and team Will help to find a buddy	Will recognise and challenge cultural stereotypes Will inquire into educational expectation Can identify two-way learning	Self aware and self questioning Will support the student's development, career planning and next steps (including re-entry to original country if that is the plan	Aware of an active in promoting social support Honour important religious and cultural practice

Figure 2.2 Supervisors' Cultural Competence (Lee, 2012)

2.6.3 Financial Status

Funding can have a significant impact on the likelihood of completing (Booth and Satchell, 1996) since if the candidate's financial status is affected, it can lead to a change in self-identity, with the student not having strong self-esteem. This view was shared by the HEC Inquiry of 2012 (HEC, 2019), which stated that PGR students should be provided with sufficient funding to pay tuition fees – together with a stipend to cover living costs. Institutions should also ensure research students have access to sufficient funding to engage in professional activities (HEC, 2019). A significant proportion of postgraduate research students receive either Research Council or institutional funding. In 2010-11, 16% of all PGR students were supported by the Research Councils, whilst 20.5% were funded directly by their institution. Nevertheless, 37.6% of all postgraduate research students are self-funded – the single largest group at this level. This is particularly prevalent in the arts and humanities. According to HESA, only 3.7% of all

PGR students are funded by their employer – once again however, this is likely to underestimate levels of employer support as the method of data collection does not detect some of the more complex funding arrangements commonly made between them and their employers. A further 3.7% of all PGR students are funded by charitable organisations like the Wellcome Trust, which supports a significant number of PhD studentships in the biomedical sciences. The funding landscape for research students is therefore diverse. The Research Councils invest around £3 billion in research annually, supporting 21% of UK PhD students. The cost of self-funding a three to four year PhD will be prohibitive for most of the population. Entry into an academic career is thus largely dependent on winning a PhD scholarship. The HEC believe that sufficient funding should be in place to replenish the research base, without relying on self-funded individuals to make up the numbers. '*Academia offers a platform for thought leadership…It is vital that it is a profession which is accessible to all with the talent, not just those able to pay their own way'* (HEC, 2019). The problems that a lack of money can cause in the PhD journey can be significant, for example, Hockey (1994) cites the material differences of candidates in comparison to their peers. This could affect social networking on a superficial level but could also cause a deeper negative impact on mental wellbeing, for example, affecting a person's self-esteem.

2.7 Physical and Mental Wellbeing

Denicolo et al., (2018) stress the importance of balance in the doctoral journey, advising that candidates should be living life at the same time as doing research. They recommend that time should be spent with people that may be relying on them, and that finding that balance is crucial for finding happiness in the study journey. They acknowledge that students can expect a 'lot of life' to happen (Denicolo et al., 2018, p 166) in the years of doctoral study. A range of

emotions is likely to be felt, such as trepidation, exhilaration, excitement, nervousness, confidence, sorrow and joy, but all of these feelings, Denicolo et al., (2018) contend, are a natural part of the rite of passage of a doctoral candidate. Delamont (in Lee et al., 2013) advises that doctoral candidates keep physically fit during their study, saying that it is all too easy to neglect one's health and become hopelessly unfit, which can have a negative effect on wellbeing.

2.7.1 Self-Efficacy and its impact on Self-Esteem

Denicolo et al. (2018) argue that self-efficacy is a central feature of successful doctoral candidates, notwithstanding the likelihood of facing times where the student feels inadequate. However, if researchers feel that they are 'imposters' and not worthy of credit, then they can potentially fall into a downward spiral of negativity. Conversely, if a doctoral candidate has courage and belief in their own ability, this leads to a boost in their self-efficacy (Denicolo et al., 2018). They recommend thinking what another researcher would think in that situation – and this would likely be that they would feel professional respect, rather than thinking the researcher as an outsider.

Several studies have highlighted that doctoral candidates may often feel anxious and unsure of their thesis, and this can impact on their self-esteem; for example, Manathunga (2005), and Liechty et al., (2009). Manathunga identified that students may not be willing to disclose certain problems to supervisors, and so, supervisors themselves should attempt to predict when there are problems developing in the early stages, rather than waiting for problems to snowball. McClure (2005) highlighted the importance of reducing anxiety and increasing confidence in the first six months of transition to doctoral study, by organising 'waypoint' seminars to support

students through the early stages. Despite these two studies being conducted in an Australian context in 2005, there are still discussions around these issues today. For example, Denicolo et al. (2018) talk about patches in a PhD study when the student feels ineffective and demotivated to continue, but these times can be passed through by pro-actively seeking satisfaction, such as thinking about more positive times when the student may have felt more valued and more confident.

However, the problem is arguably intensified for international candidates (Winchester-Seeto et al., (2014, cited in Elliot & Kobayashi, 2018) since the lack of societal familiarity may cause a loss of confidence to operate effectively in this new environment.

Another reason put forward for untimely completion of doctoral study relating to self-efficacy is that of academic procrastination. A study conducted at Kent State University in the US (Muszynski & Akamatsu, 1991) demonstrated a link between procrastination and certain cognitive and affective factors. This quantitative study was based on 151 questionnaires sent to clinical psychology doctoral candidates that had entered the programme between 1968 and 1993. Despite the study being conducted over 50 years ago, the results were interesting in that the authors were able to demonstrate a positive correlation between certain personal characteristics and time to completion of the doctorate. Cognitive factors such as self-efficacy and self-esteem; behavioural factors such as punctuality, organisation and accuracy in following instructions; and affective factors such as depression and anxiety, all contributed to the likelihood of completing on time. They found that students that had higher needs for nurturance, affiliation and cognitive structure were more likely to delay completion of their

doctorate, whilst students that had higher needs for achievement and autonomy were more likely to complete on time.

More recently, Ahern & Manathunga (2004) cited procrastination as a prime reason for untimely completion, and which was further studied in Manathunga's 2005 publication. It is also an argument developed by Kearns et al (2008), whereby they identify 'self-sabotaging behaviours such as over committing, procrastination and perfectionism' as being at the heart of the problem, which suggests that the problem lies firmly with the student. Better self-management, Kearns et al (2008) propose, can overcome the self-sabotaging behaviours which often cause doctoral candidates to not be completed on time. The problem of procrastination is also covered in Leichty et al., (2009), as an individual psychological factor which hinders completion of doctoral study in social work. Marshall (in Lee et al., 2013) also reflects on procrastination as being a blocker to progress, and this may be attributed to the feelings that a PhD student must demonstrate perfectionism in their work. Marshall also describes the peaks and troughs of confidence levels in the research journey as she drew the analogy of feeling like 'a pretty scary rollercoaster ride' where the student may well feel uncomfortable. She suggests that students should find someone or something to move focus away from the study, a change of tactic mechanism that may help the work to ultimately progress. Similarly, Denicolo et al., (2018) describe a series of 'emotional ups and downs' in the PhD journey, where the student faces times of frustration and times of elation. They state that it is important to understand the value of the contribution, in terms of impact on the wider world and impact on the student in increasing self-esteem, and effective articulation of these benefits demonstrates evaluation skills, which are useful for career development. Increasing the student's confidence is not a new idea, Manathunga identified this as a key factor in successful supervision of doctoral candidates in her 2005 study. The aim of this study, conducted in Australia, was to determine the early warning signs of student difficulties and the reasons that candidates were unwilling

to discuss certain problems with their supervisors. Being overly self-critical and having a fear of failure were found to be common characteristics of students that participated in her focus groups and so increasing their confidence was seen as paramount in ensuring progress.

2.7.2 Personal Resilience

Denicolo et al., (2018) describe resilience as one the essential characteristics of a doctoral student; the ability to bounce back after a negative experience means that the student is able to move on more quickly. A keynote presented at the ESRC Workshop by Kay Guccione (as mentioned in Section 2.2 in the context of Dr Rob Daley's work), supported the propositions by Denicolo et al., (2018), describing the lack of 'emotional readiness' that international doctoral candidates may experience as a blockage in relation to their thesis writing, and ultimately, completion. International students' vulnerabilities, as a potential unseen challenge, should be 'talked out' so that timely progression can be achieved (Guccione, cited in Elliot et al., 2017).

Wright & Cochrane (2000) ruled intrinsic characteristics, such as personal resilience, out of the scope of their quantitative study of the submission rates of 3579 PhD students, yet they do conclude by stating that PhD students in the arts and humanities are more likely to be intrinsically challenged by the PhD and those that have 'negotiated few developmental stages in life …may therefore tend to be psychologically less robust'. They advocate that institutions take account of psychological processes linked to PhD study and that students are supported through these difficult times.

2.8 Support Network

The literature on the importance of the social environment and the support network around the doctoral candidate has not been extensive, and the studies around the importance of the social network around non-native English-speaking candidates particularly, is especially sparse.

2.8.1 Family Support

Having the 'support' of close family, which can be demonstrated in different ways, is a significantly positive factor in the doctoral journey, and this is particularly the case for international students, who are away from home, facing the prospect of living and studying in a foreign country, with a foreign language and different cultural practices (Elliot et al., 2017). McIntosh (in Lee et al., 2013) reflected on her PhD journey as being full of competing activities, as a mother with a young family there always seemed to be something else to do. For example, she reflected that she 'had many distractions tugging [her] attention from the main drive of getting the thing done'. Similar findings were reported in a reductionist study conducted in 2008, by Wasburn-Moses. This US based study used questionnaires to determine satisfaction levels among doctoral candidates in special education, with the ultimate aim of reducing attrition rates. It found that the area of least satisfaction was doctoral candidates' need to juggle work and family life with their overall workload. Wasburn-Moses advocated that institutions consider the needs of part time students that are also parents, so that programs can be structured yet still maintain flexibility.

2.8.2 Supervisor Relationship

The supervisory relationship in doctoral study has been well documented in the last two decades by authors such as Lee (2012), Taylor (2012, Elliot et al., (2016), Park (2005), Delamont et al., (2000). Supervision, or lack of it, is one determining factor in students dropping out from PhD study according to Tan & Meijer (2001). Having a supervisor that understands the student's needs – which may be culturally different from their own (as in the work of Lee in 2012) and who is able to provide high quality supervision can have a significant impact on the time to completion (Park, 2005). Park argued that this previously 'secret garden' is becoming more transparent, consistent and appropriate for contemporary notions of PhD study. He argues that funding councils and research councils are now increasingly favouring proper selection, induction and training of supervisors. The nature of the relationship is important – the sensitivity, flexibility, style of supervision, academic match and experience are all important factors in the student supervisor relationship (Lee, 2013). Elliot & Kobayashi (2018) go much further in their examination of six doctoral candidates and six supervisors in an IPA study on the facets of cross-cultural supervision. Their study used a bio-ecological systems framework to categorise the challenges faced by international doctoral candidates and highlighted the 'position of support' required of supervisors to appreciate the links between academia and society. Along similar lines, but with a different perspective, Liechty et al., (2009) used Vygotsky's 1978 sociocultural theory of learning, showing that interaction with a knowledgeable other in a scaffolding structure can increase rates of completion of doctoral study in social work. Marshall (in Lee et al., 2013) points out that clashes (at times) between the supervisor and the student are not unheard of, but establishing a good working relationship is crucial. A negotiated written contract (e.g. Learning Agreement) is a good idea to outline the main aspects of the journey (Hockey, 1996; cited in Park, 2005). Tan & Meijer (2001), agree that a plan of supervision is an important point and a requirement in the Dutch system. When

this plan is not developed, students can often drop out. Problems can also arise from the supervisor being too overbearing with their own ideas about how the research should progress. A strong relationship between the student and supervisor is therefore crucial (Cryer, 2010). Mutual respect and trust are key issues and when this breaks down it is much more likely that the student will not complete (Cryer, 2010). It has also been argued that supervision satisfaction is linked to student expectations, particularly with regard to quality and effectiveness of supervision (Park, 2005). Interestingly, a survey conducted in 2000 in the Netherlands showed that most PhD students were dissatisfied with the quality of supervision and the quantity of supervision meetings (Keizer & Gordijn, 2000; cited in Tan & Meijer, 2001), suggesting that the problems are not UK specific. Tan & Meijer (2001) advocated three principles to improve the quality of supervision in the Netherlands:

1. Enforcing existing regulations with regular reviews of progress (increased frequency of supervision meetings)
2. Reducing the number of doctoral candidates per supervisor
3. Introducing courses in supervisory techniques.

In the UK, supervisor training may help to address the problems in this aspect of completion, Pole argues, (Pole et al., 1997; cited in Park 2005) and several UK HEIs, including the University of Salford, have made supervisor training compulsory. In the UK, it is common to have two supervisors; one main supervisor who takes the lead on day to day responsibility for the student, plus a 'back-up' supervisor whose main role is to keep a watching brief over the study and cover if the main supervisor is away (Cryer, 2010). However, this in itself can cause a problem, since two different points of view may cause confusion and conflict for the doctoral candidate. Two aspects to developing the relationship between student and supervisor can be identified: the first is on an administrative level, to check the protocols for the institution; and the other is on an interpersonal level, whereby both parties should accept the strengths and

weaknesses, and satisfactions and disappointments of the other (Cryer, 2010). Another issue linked to the supervisor relationship is the topic area itself. Phillips and Pugh (2010) state that the actual thesis must be in a topic area that is maintainable, and this is supported by Rudd (1985). The thesis itself must 'argue a position', rather than be a ramble, and the supervisor should take some responsibility for shaping the thesis in the early stages, a view again supported by Rudd (1985). Tan & Meijer (2001) identify the lack of appreciation as a factor in student drop out. If students do not feel that their work is appreciated, then they will lose self-esteem and this could potentially lead to dropping out. The issue of pastoral skills of supervisors is addressed by Hockey (1995); he advocates training courses for supervisors in pastoral skills which is useful in the student supervisor relationship, because, naturally, such issues can cause the supervisor to become too closely involved with the student.

2.8.3 Scholarly Communities

Researching for a doctorate can be a rewarding experience which is one of the highlights of an academic life (Denicolo et al., 2018), but when the emotional downs are present, the support of peers can help doctoral candidates to see that despite difficulties there can be a positive outcome. Social support from peers was highlighted as a critical success factor in Leichty et al., (2009), in their US based study of completion factors for doctoral students in social work. They posited that this became even more important for non-native English-speaking candidates since their regular support networks may not be present, and point to authors such as Dong (1998) who have claimed this to be the case.

A quantitative study conducted in Finland by Sakurai et al., (2012) demonstrated a positive link between the importance of scholarly communities and academic engagement. The authors used online questionnaires to 120 international doctoral candidates, and concluded that to avoid

students ‘dropping out’ of their doctoral degree, students should engage in some kind of departmental task or job role, to improve academic engagement.

Similarly, Jairam & Kahl (2012) studied the effect of social support in the successful completion of doctoral study by conducting an ‘*open-ended qualitative survey’* (Jairam & Kahl, 2012, p325) of thirty-one completed doctoral candidates, using a convenience sample and collected online. From this limited survey sample of thirty-one respondents, Jairam & Kahl generalised the findings to conclude that each social group in which doctoral candidates interact can provide both positive and negative support; also, that doctoral students can be a good source of advice and support to new candidates; and finally, that doctoral candidates can provide advice to faculty members. This study was limited in several ways; not only by the low number of respondents, but also the technique of using a convenience sample meant that the nationality, age, experience/rank, year of completion and awarding institution were all uncontrollable. In addition, conducting an online survey may not have garnered valid data, since respondents may not have been comfortable with writing down their very personal feelings about their support network.

However, despite the limitations of the studies reviewed above, it can be seen that there is some agreement that the lack of a strong social network around the PhD candidate can lead to isolation and loneliness. The effects of isolation and loneliness can be devasting to all types of doctoral candidates, but especially so for international students facing the prospect of living and studying in a foreign country, with a foreign language and different cultural practices (Elliot et al., 2017). Denicolo et al. (2018) suggest that new doctoral candidates should develop cultural awareness and sensitivity to the new environment, by heightening their awareness of cultural practices, behaviours and customs, and overcoming fear when faced with a new way of doing things. This view is supported by Delamont (in Lee et al., 2013) who states that doctoral candidates should become a ‘winner’ in terms of learning how to deal with the new

environment and avoiding certain behaviours. Arthur (2017) advocates using a 'scaffolding' mechanism around the learning experiences of international students, with a collaborative approach to support international students in their acculturation. The adjustment to a new country and new university may take time, with Arthur (2016) reporting the main concerns as being linguistic, interpersonal and the academic demands of the new environment. A collaborative, inclusive learning environment, where peers are brought together, may help to reduce the feelings of isolation and loneliness. Indeed, Denicolo et al., (2018) suggest that if peer groups do not already exist, then it is a good idea to form one, such as the 'Scaredy Cats Club' that one of the authors of her book formed during her PhD candidature. This was a scholarly community of doctoral researchers that were particularly anxious about their work and by joining together, they could share their experiences and develop a network of support.

Scholarly communities were also recognised as important in a US-based study conducted at the University of South Carolina (Maher et al., 2013) where the authors found that doctoral degree completion could be expedited by the use of writing groups; as a scholarly community and support network of doctoral students in the dissertation phase. These one-day sessions were organised by the faculty (initially) to encourage doctoral candidates to set specific writing goals for the day and then to report on them at the end of the session. The qualitative study consisted of sixteen semi-structured interviews with participants of the writing group sessions. This simple pedagogical strategy, the authors claimed, had improved the participants' doctoral completion time.

The study environment itself also has an impact on student completion, since the working environment may be populated with people who may or may not help progression. In addition, if basic needs are not being met (such as the need for a desk, chair, computer with appropriate software, storage solutions, etc.), as per Maslow's hierarchy of needs (see section 2.5.1), then how can the student be expected to self-actualise? This can be further exacerbated by

inconsistencies in how PhD students are treated, being funded to attend conferences, for example.

In terms of research training for doctoral candidates, there are considerable discrepancies in the models of PGR study in different countries and indeed different HEI's in the UK. This can range from students having considerable taught elements as part of the PGR programme to develop research, language and critical thinking skills, to HEI's which offer very little in terms of developing these skills specifically. Yet, there seems to be some consensus that this previously unknown area is developing in the right direction, since PhD students used to be left at the total mercy of their supervisor. These days most departments offer *some* degree of support. Taking these relatively new developments a step further, four-year programmes such as the 'New Route PhD' or many similar schemes funded by the EPSRC, BBSRC, MRC, the Wellcome Trust and others, offer an even greater degree of formal training (http://www.findaphd.com). Graduate schools typically offer transferrable skills training, work and overseas placements for doctoral students, and activities which bring together students from across large departments, groups of departments or a whole university to foster interdisciplinary learning. Indeed, Delamont (in Lee et al., 2013) states that PhD students should avoid being intellectually isolated by joining various networks both in the university, joining a relevant learned society, and joining communities online. These activities help students to get the most out of their PhDs and can contribute to successful careers after graduation (russellgroup.ac.uk). In agreement with this principle, Cryer (2010) argues that a research degree is about research training as well as contributing to knowledge in the production of the thesis, and the supervisor should coordinate the research training which is necessary for the student (Cryer, 2010). Blackmore (in Lee et al., 2013) highlighted the importance of a seminar group that gave her a forum to voice concerns about her work with peers and tutors, which led her to be able to work through the difficult issues.

Whilst Frame and Allen (2002) called for a more flexible approach in research training (cited in Park, 2005), Park (2005) argued that potential employers and funding bodies require more structured, compulsory, broader, more appropriate research training of doctoral candidates, as not all successful candidates go on to a career in academia. Some of this need came from 'Roberts' funding and this was a catalyst in changing the structure of the doctorate in the UK. The Roberts Report (2002) argued that the traditional PhD focus, on the production of the thesis, failed to recognise the importance of gaining other, more transferable skills.

There is agreement in the literature, therefore, that having social networks with like-minded people (whether that be people from the discipline, the type of methodology employed, the physical location of study, and so on) can help the student to feel less isolated. Indeed, a qualitative study of 60 PhD students in 6 disciplines, conducted at the University of Maine in 2010, found that the socialisation experiences of candidates significantly affects their likelihood of success (Gardner, 2010).

In STEM subjects, it is much more likely that PhD students will be part of a supervisory team, with several doctoral candidates and senior academics working on similar projects as part of the same team (Denicolo et al., 2018). This could explain why completion rates in STEM subjects are significantly higher than in the social sciences and humanities (Booth and Satchell, 1996). Wright and Cochrane (2010) also refer to the importance of subject discipline, again pointing out that science students are more likely to complete than non-science students. Booth and Satchell (1996) also showed that student completion for PhD studies can vary by mode of study; full time students are more likely to complete (at all) than part time students. This may be attributed to the length of process for part time study, although most institutions expect part time doctoral candidates to complete in 6 – 8 years (Denicolo et al., 2018).

2.9 Outcomes of the Literature Review

In line with many qualitative, inductive studies, as this one is (to be discussed in Chapter 3), the scope and eventual outcomes of the literature review have been relatively broad, for two main reasons, which will now be discussed.

Firstly, whilst the subject of doctoral education has been gaining attention in the secondary literature over the last decade in particular; at the start of this PhD journey, there was limited relevant literature on the possible reasons for untimely completion of study. As pointed out, only one peer-reviewed source was found with the keywords *International, doctoral, barriers and completion.* Only one book publication on the experiences of doctoral candidates was found: *Research Journeys – A Collection of Narratives of the Doctoral Experience'* edited by Lee, Blackmore and Seal in 2013. This book was edited and written by academic and professional doctorate students at different stages of their research, who shared their stories of their experiences on the journey to completion. This collection of narratives is from (at that time) doctoral candidates; it differs from this study in that the candidates do not refer to being second language learners and apart from one candidate who failed the viva voce examination and was preparing to re-write his thesis, there is no reference to the likelihood of untimely completion. However, the book does offer insight into the 'perilous realm of the PhD' and how students might 'escape' into the next stage of life (Delamont, in Lee et al., 2013, p 13).

The specific literature on the completion of doctoral study is, therefore, still lacking; that which is addressed is either reductionist in nature, often US and Australian centric, and is not based on empirical study, bringing into question its validity.

This lack of high-quality qualitative studies, for example, that have used the four principles identified by Yardley (2000) mean that understanding of the doctoral journey in the literature is limited. The four principles which Yardley presents for assessing the quality of qualitative

research are the sensitivity to context (for example the socio-cultural context); commitment and rigour (how thorough the collection method and analysis has been); transparency and coherence (how clearly the work is presented and how coherently the work hangs together); and impact and importance (the test of real validity being whether it tells the reader something interesting). These principles are inherent in this study; how they have been built into the study will be explained in Chapter 3.

The second reason for the nature of the literature review being relatively broad is because the study is inductive in nature; the researcher had no preconceived ideas about what the experiences of non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates would be, and so there was much iteration between the primary and secondary data, naturally widening the search circle. This was an important consideration, since the 'voices' of participants eventually focused the secondary literature search and review.

2.10 Chapter Summary

This literature review chapter has critically analysed the secondary data to locate the present study and to highlight the gaps in current literature so that this thesis can make an original contribution to knowledge.

The current UK doctoral landscape, in terms of governance and regulation, completion rates for doctoral study, the structure of the UK doctorate and the particular issues affecting international doctoral students, have been presented in this chapter.

The literature relating to the reasons for untimely completion of doctoral study has been critically reviewed. It was posited that many of the reviewed studies have been conducted in

either a positivistic way, which has simplified the factors put forward for untimely completion and does not address the ‘why’ question; in a non-empirical way, bringing into question the validity of the work; or has been conducted in the USA and Australia.

The next chapter is the research methodology chapter, which will explain and justify the choices made in the research design process, in light of the literature reviewed in this chapter, so that the aim and objectives of the study can be achieved.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Chapter Introduction

The previous chapter was a literature review to locate the present study in the context of doctoral education in the UK, and to highlight the gaps in current knowledge on time to completion of doctoral study by non-native English-speaking candidates.

This chapter shows how the research design, using the conceptual framework of comparative Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) with two groups of completers, was the most appropriate methodological strategy to achieve the research aim and objectives as presented in Chapter 1. The chapter will address how and why the research design choices constituted the IPA strategy, and the justifications for these choices, so that the research can be oriented in context.

It is not the intention to provide detailed discussions around the origins of phenomenological inquiry, although there will be a brief overview of the original philosophers that formed the basis of thought on phenomenological research. Rather, the chapter is written with the intention of explaining and justifying the choices made in the research design.

3.2 Research Methodology

Saunders et al (2009, 2012, 2016) describe methodology as how the research is undertaken with regard to the theoretical and philosophical assumptions upon which the research is based, and the implications of these choices on the choice of methods adopted. In addition, Yin (2003) argued that to have a solid foundation for analysis, the researcher needs to be aware of choice of data collection methods and its appropriateness to the research. The theory of research is a complex area with many issues to consider, and many authors have written about the practices of conducting a research study, yet there is no one universally accepted definition of research.

For example, Bryman (2007) states that whilst it is complex, there are two issues of particular importance. The first is what form the research is to take and the second is whether the research is testing or building a theory. This is discussed further in Section 3.6.1 (Deductive and Inductive Research). Saunders et al. (2007, p.7) define research as '*something that people undertake in order to find out things in a systematic way*'. Theory is important to social researchers because it provides a rationale for the way in which the research has been carried out (Bryman, 2007). There is the acceptance that if knowledge is to be valid and reliable then research must be the basis of decision making.

The choice of research strategy and design can only come from knowledge of possibilities, and this study takes an unusual course, partly because of the researcher's previous and current work with non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates, and partly because of the reflexive nature of this study, which is an inherent part of a phenomenological inquiry. Having gained the knowledge about different ways of researching a particular area, the researcher here has chosen to follow a narrow, qualitative path of IPA; a research strategy that is also unusual in the field of educational research.

3.3 IPA Strategy

IPA is a relatively new approach to qualitative inquiry, originating in psychology (by Jonathan Smith) in the 1990s, but increasingly spreading to other cognate disciplines (Smith et al., 2013). It is a strategy which is committed to the examination of how people make sense of their (important) life experiences (Smith et al., 2013) and is about exploring these experiences, each in its own terms, rather than being constrained by a priori theorising (Smith, 2016). It is an examination of how people understand their own experience, how they reflect on it and how they make meaning of this experience. IPA is therefore concerned with examining the detailed life experiences of individuals, and whilst there is no one clear definition of IPA, most authors

agree that the main tenets of IPA are that it is about taking an experiential perspective (Eatough & Smith, 2008). Pringle et al., (2011) espouse the benefits of IPA in a healthcare context, stating that using this qualitative experiential approach facilitates a greater understanding of a situation; hearing the voices of the participants and seeing it from their point of view. This view was also adopted in Erdem et al., (2020), a study of male mental health (using IPA), where a small sample size (of seven) allowed for original meaning to be retained. However, there are also inevitable criticisms of IPA, for example, Malim et al., (1992; cited in Pringle et al.) pointed out that generalisations cannot be made because of the small sample sizes, and there is difficulty in the analyst's interpretations since they are so subjective, and so it is difficult to justify the decision of which variables are the most important. Of course, a competing argument is that because the sample sizes are so small, it allows for much deeper, richer, more meaningful understandings of the unique individual, and this interpretation can be given credibility through the use of direct quotes to demonstrate meaning (Pringle et al., 2011).

In developing the IPA strategy in the 1990s, Smith et al., (2013) summarised the great philosophers Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre as providing the theoretical foundations for this type of phenomenological inquiry. Husserl focused on the importance and relevance of experience and the perception of that experience, whereas Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre developed this focus further by accepting the person as being part of a wider world with objects, relationships, culture and language. The philosophy that humans do not live in an isolated world, but rather live in complex, constructed realities, has value in being understood, since each person is unique and is part of a complex, interrelated world (Smith et al., 2013). Eatough & Smith (p195, 2008) describe it as '*an attempt to understand how we have come to be situated in the world in the particular ways we find ourselves'*. An IPA study is, therefore, one which attempts to understand the complexities of an experience, reflections of a

lived process, an '*unfurling of perspectives and meanings, which are unique to the person's embodied and situated relationship to the world*' (Smith et al., 2013, p.21).

Figure 3.1 shows the three key tenets of an IPA study as being phenomenology: uncovering meaning of a lived experience that a person has had; hermeneutics: how researchers interpret this meaning and make sense of the interpretation; and idiography: concerned with the very particular, a person as a 'unique case' (Gibbs, 2010; cited in Grainger, 2015), which requires depth of analysis from a small sample.

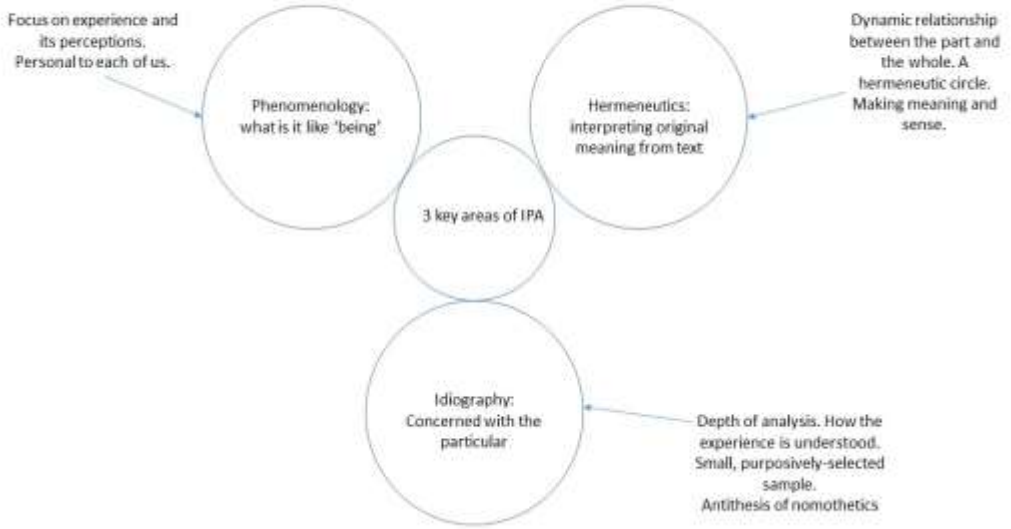


Figure 3.1 Three Key Tenets of IPA

In this study, the phenomenological experiences of two groups of non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates were elucidated in the semi-structured, narrative style interviews. Their phenomenological claims of their lived experience reflected their constructed reality, how they saw the doctoral journey. The hermeneutic interpretation of these phenomenological claims in the interview transcripts was conducted with rigorous attention to detail, not only in their voices in the transcript, but in their reactions to their own reflections, this is something that Yardley (2000) terms *commitment and rigour*, as a principle of assessing quality in qualitative research.

There was also a level of intuition shown by the researcher (Smith et al., 2013) which requires an empathetic stance to be taken, showing *sensitivity to context* (Yardley et al., 2000) and a hermeneutic circle, or double-hermeneutic aspect; and this, in turn, requires a reflexive stance to be taken, which will be the focus of the next section.

3.3.1 Reflexivity

Reflexivity in an IPA study is crucial, without it, it cannot be an IPA study. This is because the researcher must reflect on their own position in order to truly empathise with those being researched; it is a hermeneutic circle, about gaining an understanding of one's own internal dialogue in response to the participants' narrative (Etherington, 2004). For this reason, the researcher's reflexive account of the doctoral journey is provided in Appendix 1. Saunders et al. (2016) also suggest that keeping a reflective diary or workbook can help to clarify emergent thoughts, as observing one's own research practice enables a full learning cycle to take place (as per the work of Kolb). They argue that reflexivity is a skill which should be developed throughout the PhD study, since questioning one's own thinking and learning helps to determine the axiological position. Denicolo et al., (2018) put forward a similar point: that 'diary' writing can encourage individual experience-based reflection and ultimately strengthen confidence.

A reflexive journal was compiled throughout the study, in order to document personal experience, reflections, thoughts and feelings associated with the PhD journey, so that an empathetic stance could be taken, which is crucial to a narrative inquiry (Saunders et al., 2016). Some of these reflections were presented openly in Appendix 1. The reflexive journal therefore includes personal experience of being a doctoral candidate, dealing with non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates in a work context, and also the experiences of presenting at

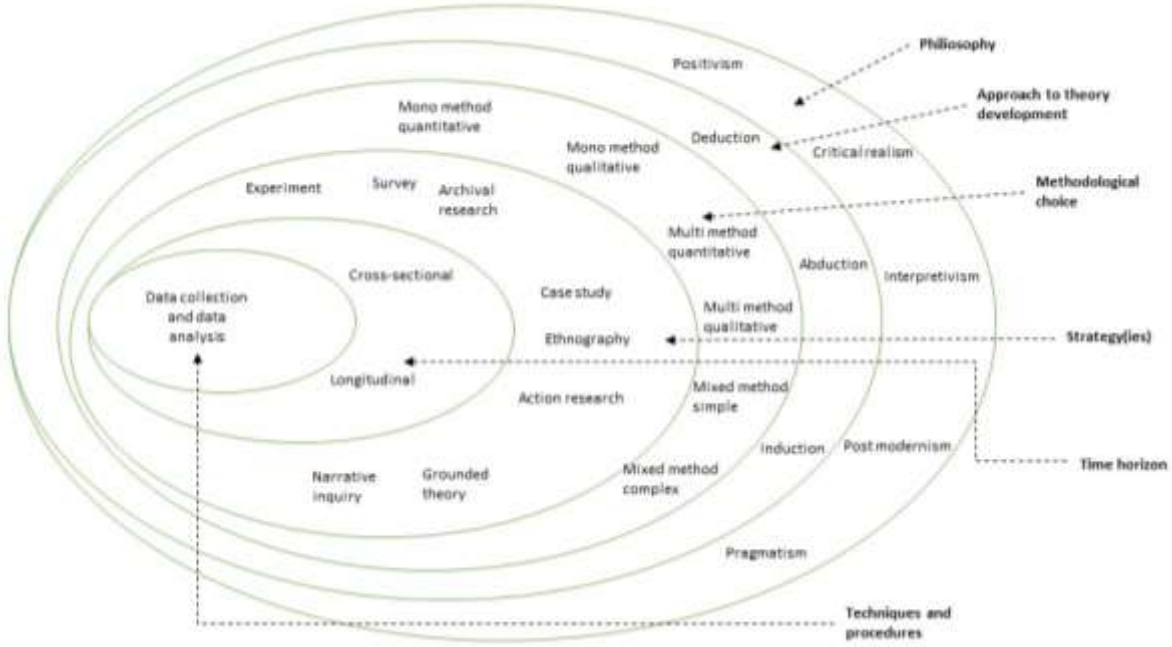
various events and conferences organised by Vitae and the UKCGE. Three UKCGE events held in 2012 and two UKCGE Annual Conferences (2013 & 2018) had an impact on the reflective stance taken in this study, since they were directly related to the topic area of UK PhD completion, and which allowed for debate with other academics in the field of higher education research; these reflections were documented in the reflective journal and an outline of these events with associated abstracts and notes is presented in Appendix 2. Similar to the argument put forward by Etherington (2004), Smith et al., (2013) argue that the reason for compiling a reflexive journal is that reflexivity in a value laden IPA study is necessary to provide research rigour and thus add validity to the study.

3.4 Research Process

The study was conducted in three main phases; however, the study was ultimately inductive and iterative in nature, with constant movement between primary and secondary data. The first phase was a literature review of the secondary data published on the construct of doctoral degrees, completion factors, and the theoretical lens through which the study is located. The second phase was concerned with primary data collection; as a phenomenological inquiry, this study has employed a pre-study focus group, and for the two groups of participants in the main study, in-depth, narrative style interviews, in order to achieve the aim and objectives of this study. Ethical Approval was granted by the University of Salford and guidance documents from the British Psychological Society have been taken into consideration in the approach to collecting primary data (British Psychological Society, 2019). Phase three was an analysis and discussion of the main findings, firstly through the thematic analysis of the pre-study focus group, and then through the conceptual framework of comparative IPA of the lived experiences of the two groups of participants in the main study.

The methodological steps taken in this study are now going to be articulated using the metaphor of the 'Research Onion' developed by Saunders et al., (2016).

Figure 3.2 Research Onion (Adapted from Saunders et al., 2016)



3.5 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy is the foundation of the research, concerned with the beliefs held and assumptions made about the development of knowledge (Saunders et al., 2016). The way a researcher views the world around them (ontological position), what they consider acceptable and desirable knowledge (epistemological position) and the level of detachment from the study (axiological position) all constitute a philosophical stance taken in research design (Saunders et al., 2016). The philosophical position of this research is grounded in phenomenological inquiry, since it is about the lived experiences of two groups of non-native English-speaking, recently completed doctoral holders, as they reflect on their PhD journey. This leads it to being a study which is constructivist in its ontological position, where individuals construct their own phenomenological truth in their articulation of their reality of the PhD journey; interpretivist in its epistemological position, where memories and reflections of the PhD journey are

hermeneutically interpreted as being a valid account of human knowledge; and value laden in its axiological position, since values and personal stories form the relationship between the lived experience of the participant and the researcher, as a hermeneutic circle. These philosophical underpinnings will now be discussed in more detail.

Easterby-Smith et al. (2002) noted that there are three reasons for understanding philosophical stance in a research study. Firstly, it can help to clarify the research design to consider the involvement of what evidence is required and how it is to be gathered and interpreted. This helps the researcher to provide appropriate answers to basic research questions. Secondly, some knowledge of philosophy benefits researchers so that an appropriate research strategy is recognised and critical points for adapting the research approach are identified. Thirdly, it brings about understanding of which philosophical stance can help to identify and even design/develop appropriate methodologies for the research study. Denicolo et al. (2018) agree with this argument: that the underpinning philosophical paradigm is crucial in laying the foundations of the research. Easterby-Smith et al. (2002) also observed that failure to think through philosophical issues may seriously affect the quality of the research outcomes. Quite simply, the choice of philosophical stance affects the overall quality of the thesis, since it is likely to dictate all of the other 'layers' of the Research Onion (Saunders et al., 2009). Philosophical stance is, therefore, on the outer layer of Saunders' research onion (2009, 2012, 2016). The philosophical foundations of a research study should be just that: foundations. Upon these foundations, the study is built. The philosophical aspects of this study are considered and explained below, in terms of the ontological, epistemological and axiological foundations, followed by the methodological choices that these foundations naturally lead to. It is these foundations which direct the study and inform the detailed design of the research methodology, in order to best achieve the aim and objectives of the study. These are important aspects of any research project because the way a research problem is framed determines the strategies

employed (Depoy & Gitlin, 2005). Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (2003) discussed a research paradigm as being a basic set of beliefs that guide action for the research to develop. A keynote lecture at the SPARC (Salford Postgraduate Annual Research Conference) in 2011, delivered by Farzad Khosrowhahi, Professor in the School of the Built Environment at the University of Salford (at that time) clarified the main principles of philosophical stance of a research project as being the four pillars of a position: ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological assumptions that drive the research. Similar propositions have been put forward by Denicolo et al., (2018), Easterby-Smith et al., (2002) and Saunders et al., (2009).

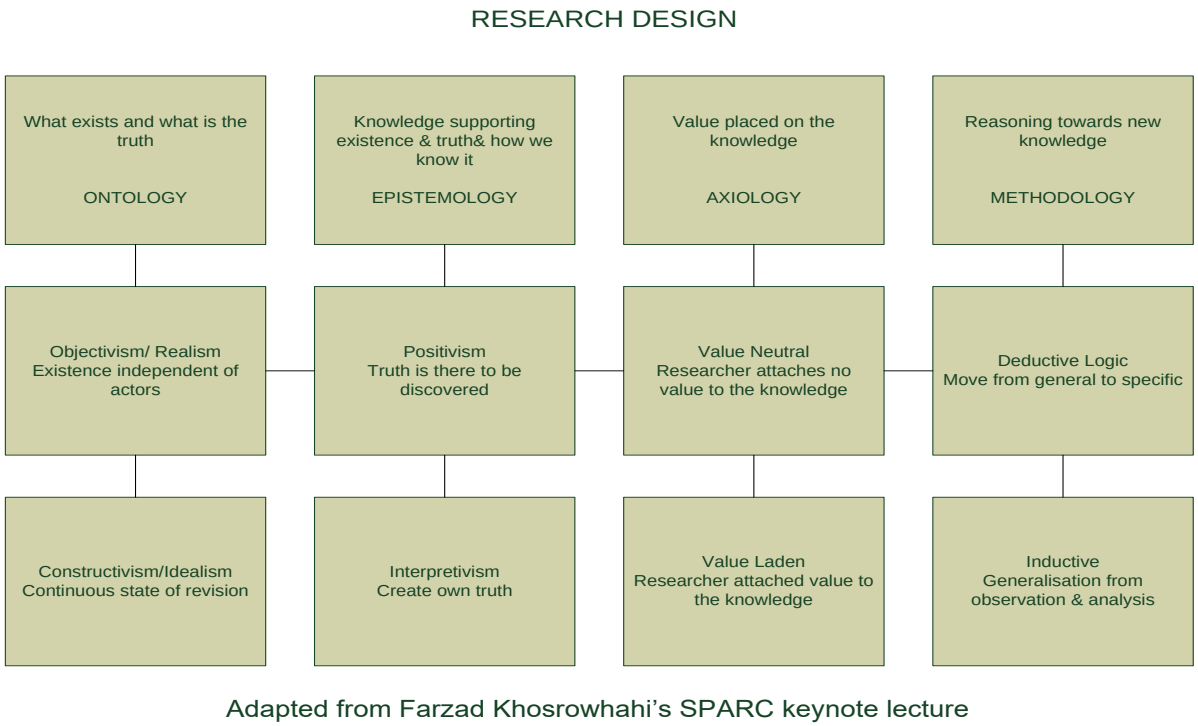


Figure 3.3 Research Design (Adapted from: Khosrowhahi, 2011)

3.5.1 Ontological Foundations

The ontological foundations of a research study refer to the beliefs that people hold about the nature of the world; the 'truth' that is held on a phenomenon, or in other words, the

phenomenological reality. Saunders et al. (2016) describe ontology as how to view and study the research objects, and these 'objects' can be materials, people, organisations, and so on. In this study, people are the research object; their articulation of their own doctoral journey and the consequent reflections about how they have come through this period of time are very true for them. It is a subjective reality which is socially constructed, i.e. constructed in a person's mind and which is open to continuous revision as the person develops their thoughts and learning. This is something that Sartre (1948; cited in Smith et al., 2013) stressed; that we are always becoming ourselves, we exist before our essence. In this study, the lived experience of the study participants as being a non-native English-speaking doctoral candidate was the participants' phenomenological truth, and at the point in time of the interviews, this truth was shared as their essence – how the participants truly felt. In other words, as Sartre pointed out, they had existed *before* they became their essence.

Several authors have expressed philosophical stance as being on a continuum, for example, Khosrowhahi (2011) described ontological foundations as being presented on an ontological continuum between realism or objectivism at one end, where existence of the 'truth' is independent of the actors, and constructivism or idealism at the other, where the 'truth' is in a continuous state of revision. The ontological foundations for this study fit at the constructivism/subjectivism/idealism end of the continuum, whereby reality is a product of the mind, i.e. an awareness of consciousness and cognition with little or no independent status (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). The study is complex, rich, and with multiple interpretations and meanings, making it explicitly subjective (Saunders et al., 2016). There are, therefore, multiple realities in this study, as each individual views their own phenomenological truth as being true for them, making meaning and sense of their reflections. Similarly, Denicolo et al., (2018) describe the nature of constructivism as a paradigm in which every single individual person dynamically develops their unique view of the world, and this view of the 'truth' influences

their behaviours. In this study, each participant's doctoral journey is explored through their reflections, memories, feelings, beliefs, and perceptions of the experience, each with their own dynamically developed view, which has impacted on their behaviours during and after their doctoral journey. Moreover, the researcher is involved directly with the subject matter and works with similar individuals to those that participated in this study; in terms of non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates along their PhD journey, and therefore cannot be independent of their 'reality'. In addition, as a doctoral candidate, the researcher is experiencing a similar journey as is being studied, although with different blockers and enablers, and so independence from the research is impossible; a view held by Saunders et al. (2016) in describing the relationship between researcher and researched in a constructivist study as 'integral'.

3.5.2 Epistemological Foundations

Epistemology is concerned with knowledge; in fact, the word literally means knowledge of knowledge. It is about what constitutes legitimate knowledge; how people see knowledge as being 'acceptable' and valid (Saunders et al., 2016). Burrell and Morgan (1979) describe it as how we communicate or articulate the knowledge to others; in some fields 'acceptable' knowledge would be seen as numerical data, whereas in others, depictions, narratives and stories would be seen as articulating acceptable or legitimate knowledge (Saunders et al., 2016).

Easterby-Smith (2008) described that having an epistemological perspective is important for two reasons. Firstly, it can help to clarify issues of research design. Secondly, knowledge of research philosophy will help the researcher to determine which research design will yield meaningful answers to the research questions.

Khosrowhahi (2011) described epistemological foundations as being presented on a continuum, between positivism, where the truth is there to be discovered as a set of objective facts, and interpretivism, where each person creates their own truth in their own mind, so that for each person, the truth is their perception of reality. For interpretivist researchers, the data is subjective and socially constructed; there are multiple realities because each person is different (Saunders et al., 2016). The most appropriate way to collect this kind of data is through narratives and opinions, to really understand how people attach meaning to a phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2016).

The nature of this study, therefore, lends itself to the epistemological position of an interpretivist stance, where the essence of the object is multiple (Thiertart, 2001), since each person has their own perceptions, feelings and experiences that they shared as their lived experience, their own narrative of their doctoral journey. This epistemological stance, of a phenomenological inquiry, was crucial in order to gain rich, deep, complex data, in acceptance of, rather than in spite of diversity. Phenomenologists, Saunders et al., (2016) argue, study existence and interpretations of their experiences in order to generate meaning, and in this study the hermeneutic sense-making was further interpreted, in terms of what the 'sense' was to the participant and how this 'sense' was understood. Furthermore, Smith et al., (2013) discuss the concepts of multiple realities in the context of lived experiences, and that IPA is a way of articulating a detailed examination of human lived experiences, each in their own terms and ways, rather than having predefined categories, and this is what makes it phenomenological. It differs from pure hermeneutic research as this often studies texts and symbols (such as biblical texts or historical writings) in order to interpret what the author meant, rather than recollections or memories of an experience (Smith et al., 2009), yet in this study there is hermeneutic and double-hermeneutic analysis of the interview transcripts, since '*the researcher is trying to make*

sense of the participant trying to make sense of their experiences' (Hodgkinson, p. 33, 34; 2011). Similarly, Smith & Osborn (2015) defined double hermeneutics as the researcher trying to make sense of the participants, trying to make sense of their world.

Thus, there are significant differences between the type of knowledge (i.e. the epistemological stance) that is presented in this thesis and what has been described as 'traditional' positivistic research. The main differences are explained in the table below.

Table 3.1 Differences between Phenomenological Research and Positivistic Research

Factor	**Phenomenological Research**	**Positivistic Research**
To observe	Is part of the process	Is independent
Human interest	Main drivers of inquiry	Must be irrelevant
Explanation	Increases general understanding	Demonstrates causality
Research progresses through	Gathering rich data from which ideas are induced	Hypotheses and Deductions
Concepts	Stakeholder perspectives	Operationalised and Measured
Units of Analysis	Complex phenomena such as people	Reduced to simple terms
Generalisation through	Theoretical abstraction	Statistical reliability
Sampling requires	Small numbers	Large numbers

Source: Adapted from Easterby-Smith et al., (2004, p30)

Collis and Hussey (2008) present a similar set of definitions regarding philosophical positioning, as shown in the table overleaf.

Table 3.2 Philosophical Assumptions

Assumption	Questions	Quantitative	Qualitative
Ontology	What is the nature of reality?	Reality is objective and singular	Reality is subjective and multiple, constructed in the mind.
Epistemology	How is the knowledge expressed?	Positivistic research demonstrated statistically	Interpretivistic research articulated through language
Axiology	What is the role of values?	None – research is value free and unbiased	Value laden and biased
Methodology	What is the process of research?	Deductive, cause and effect, isolated before study, highly reliable.	Inductive, shaping of themes / ideas, context bound.

Source: Adapted from Collis and Hussey (2008)

It can be seen from the tables above that a phenomenological study, as in this thesis, is concerned with the subjective aspects of human activity by emphasising the meaning rather than measuring an isolated phenomenon. Indeed, Husserl (1859-1938), who was the founding father of phenomenological research, first acknowledged the existence of conscious subjective experience as the focus, rather than setting presuppositions about a particular phenomenon (Grainger, 2015). In other words, the epistemological position of interpretivism in this study focuses on the meaning of how the experience of being a non-native English-speaking PhD candidate has been reflected on, articulated, interpreted, and understood as 'acceptable' knowledge.

3.5.3 Axiological Foundations

Axiology is about the role of values and ethics within the research process (Saunders et al., 2016); both those of the researcher and how these impact on the study, and those of the research participants (in an interpretivistic epistemological position). The study is explicitly loaded with values and beliefs, through the lived experiences that are articulated by the participants and the double-hermeneutic circle of the researcher's reflections – trying to make sense and meaning from the participant's own reflections, i.e. their own sense making and meaning (Smith et al., 2009).

Khosrowhahi (2011) described axiological foundations as being presented on an axiological continuum, with 'value neutral' or as Saunders et al., (2016) name it, 'value-bound' axiology at one end of the continuum and value-laden at the other. In a value-neutral study, the researcher does not 'inject' any value into the phenomenon being studied, in fact, it is important that the researcher is detached from that which is being studied in order to eliminate bias. Clearly, this axiological position is not suitable for this study, since the researcher cannot remain detached; on the contrary, the researcher has an attached relationship, a connectedness with the participants, where both researcher and participants add value to the study. A value-laden study, therefore, is one in which the researcher and the researched are integral, and so it is a more reflexive process, where both parties are interpreting meaning from the articulated journeys and the richness of the data is brought about by the values being present, which is the case here.

Therefore, since the study is concerned with lived experiences of the doctoral journey, the axiological position is a value laden standpoint. As a phenomenological inquiry, it is accepted that values, beliefs and views not only 'colour' or 'bias' the research but that this adds richness

to the study and so the researcher must adopt an empathetic stance towards those being researched.

The work is, therefore, highly subjective. Saunders et al (2009) claim that subjectivism is where the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors leads to social phenomena being created. In contrast, an objectivist perspective, according to Saunders (2009) relies on the notion that social entities exist in an external reality, separate from the existence of the phenomena studied. Similarly, Crotty (1998) explains objectivism as being the notion that truth and meaning are not conscious thoughts and that the object being studied exists independently of the social actor, which means that in social contexts there would be no meaning attached to the research. Objective research is not, therefore, a suitable choice of philosophical stance (and consequently, methodological choice) for this study. Whilst objective studies may accept or reject a hypothesis and present this data in a numerical way to claim or discover a fact, this study explores the 'truth' that exists in participants' recollections of their doctoral journey; their lived experiences of their life as a PhD researcher.

In this way, each respondent to this study is considered as the unit of analysis. Long (2013) and Ragin & Becker (1992) defined a unit of analysis as a set of elements which provide the data to answer 'who' or 'what' type questions, the relevant source of data from individuals or groups which relate to the research aims, objectives and research questions.

3.6 Research Approach

The research approach, as described by Saunders' et al. (2009, 2012, 2016) in the Research Onion, is the second layer after the research philosophy and refers to how the theory is developed and designed in relation to it being inductive, deductive and (in the 2016 edition) abductive. This distinction is described by Bryman (2008) as helpful in articulating the

relationship between theory and research, however, Bryman argues that it is better to think of these as ‘tendencies’ rather than approaches, as per Saunders et al. (2007, 2009, 2012, 2016).

3.6.1 Deductive and Inductive Research

Collis and Hussy (2003) argued that in the natural sciences, a deductive approach is often considered as the most appropriate, since it allows for a specific phenomenon to be tested. This is because in deductive theory, the researcher develops a hypothesis from the theory that is already known, then attempts to test this hypothesis through empirical scrutiny (Bryman, 2008). The hypothesis is translated into something ‘operational’, that is, how the data can be collected to test the principles in the hypothesis (Bryman, 2008). The process of deduction was described by Bryman (2008) as follows:

1. Theory
2. Hypothesis
3. Data Collection
4. Findings
5. Hypothesis confirmed or rejected
6. Revision of theory

Bryman (2008) describes this process as more like a ‘general orientation’, rather than a series of naturally occurring events, although there is logic and clarity in the idea of developing theories and then testing them, as this gives them validity. However, it must be pointed out that this method of inquiry is one dimensional in nature, it does not take account of the fact that as the research process develops, so the views may change affecting the data, and sometimes the relevance of particular data may not be apparent until it is too late (Bryman, 2008).

Inductive theory is where the researcher infers the implications of the findings, which are then ‘fed back’ into the ‘stock of theory’ (Bryman, 2008), which then can be aligned to a particular domain of inquiry. Saunders et al., (2009) argued that an inductive approach provides a better

understanding of the nature of the problem under investigation and in developing such an understanding, shows the strength of the research strategy, a view shared by Denicolo et al., (2018).

The findings, or more specifically, the interpretation of the findings, are therefore the contribution to the knowledge in inductive research. Bryman (2008) explains that theory is the 'output' of the research and not vice versa. However, what sometimes occurs is that the researcher does not develop a theory at all, rather the output of research is merely a set of 'empirical generalisations' (Bryman, 2008).

Inductive research is most explicitly carried out in grounded theory methodology, an approach first outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and later by Charmaz (2006). It is an approach which generates the theory out of the data so that the data is 'grounded'. With this approach, the meaning is theoretically grounded in the data, rather than being an abstract and distant relative. This research strategy was carefully considered, but finally rejected for this study, because the study was not attempting to develop a theory relating to the experience of being a non-native English-speaking PhD candidate. Rather, it focused on giving voice to the very personal lived experiences of two groups of participants: one group that had completed their doctorate within 52 months, and one group that had taken longer and were therefore considered to be late completers. This enabled commonalities and differences to also be drawn from the two sets of data.

3.6.2 Research Purpose

The research purpose is about asking oneself (as the researcher) what the main aim is and how this is translated into the research questions. The way the research questions are posed determines the kind of research to be conducted. There are four main types of research, according to Collis and Hussey (2008). These are: exploratory research, which is conducted to

examine an issue when there are very few, or no earlier studies; descriptive research, which describes the problem as it exists; explanatory research, the continuation of descriptive phenomena; and predictive research, which generalises and predicts based on hypothesised general relationships (Collis & Hussey, 2008). Saunders et al. (2016) categorise the types of research as being exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, evaluative, and combined. Similar definitions are provided for exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory research; Saunders et al. (2016) elucidate further by discussing evaluative studies as being those which assess how well something works and combined studies as those which combine more than one purpose.

This study can be classified as exploratory research, since there are no empirical studies that articulate the lived experiences of non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates with an attempt to uncover the underlying reasons for time to completion of study. Exploratory research is conducted to examine a real-life research problem in which there are few previous studies available (Collis & Hussey, 2008). It is a study which investigates phenomena to create meaning and is often used to refine and focus the research questions, although in this study, this is not the purpose. Creswell (2007) advocates that exploratory qualitative studies which use a case study design should include tightly bound limits to the study, such as research protocols, time constraints and limits in terms of what aspects are being addressed, and where the data are gathered. This study accepts some of these principles, in terms of having protocols in the focus group and interview schedules, but it cannot be classed as a case study research. In this thesis, the core, underlying reasons for time to completion of doctoral study are thoroughly investigated and explored, through the conceptual framework of comparative IPA with the two groups of participants, in order to draw commonalities and differences between them, and thus to make sense and meaning from the narrative accounts of the doctoral journey.

Therefore, in summary, this study is exploratory and inductive in nature, because the issues underlying the ‘socially accepted’ reasons for untimely completion of doctoral study are

explored and uncovered, and there is a lack of established empirical data (in this context) and 'theory' related to untimely completion of doctoral study.

3.7 Research Strategy

The research strategy adopted in this study flows from the underpinnings of the research: the research philosophy and approach. Given that the research philosophy is grounded in a phenomenological and constructivist ontology, with a hermeneutically interpretivistic epistemology and a fully value-laden (double-hermeneutic) axiology, and the research approach is explorative and inductive, it is appropriate, therefore, for this study to use IPA as the research strategy. Denicolo et al., (2018) argue that authority and credibility in this type of research is demonstrated by the design being robustly appropriate for the phenomena and purpose of the research, and that the techniques employed allow for true meaning to be interpreted. In this study, a comparative IPA strategy is used to enrich understanding of the doctoral journey 'as a meaningful whole' (Saunders et al., 2016) for participants in the two groups, as they reflected on their lived experiences of being a non-native English-speaking doctoral candidate. These experiences were interpreted in a hermeneutic (and double-hermeneutic) way, for both sets of participants, so that sense could be made of the phenomenological claims, and commonalities and differences between the two groups could be drawn out.

3.7.2 Data Collection and Analysis Process for an IPA Study

Smith et al. (2013) state that there is no 'one best method' of working with data in an IPA study, and do not prescribe a definitive account of 'how to' conduct IPA analysis, yet provide some steps that are usually taken in IPA studies.

1. Conducting interviews
2. Transcribing data

3. Reading and re-reading transcripts
4. Initial noting on the transcripts
    - Descriptive and exploratory comments (key words and phrases)
    - Linguistic comments (use of pronouns, pauses, laughter, repetition, tone)
    - Conceptual comments (focus shifts away from explicit to interpretation)
5. Deconstructing the parts then reconstructing (words, phrases, meanings)
6. Developing emergent themes (focus on discreet chunks of data, chronological order)
7. Searching for connections across emergent themes
    - Abstraction (developing clusters)
    - Subsumption (developing a super-ordinate theme)
    - Polarization
    - Contextualisation
    - Numeration
    - Function
8. Developing patterns across cases
    - Master table of themes (a gestalt or frame)

Adapted from Smith et al., (2009)

These steps are defined as common processes rather than a prescribed set of instructions, the essence of how IPA researchers can work with the data to gain the deep understanding required, the empathetic stance that Saunders et al. (2016) refer to. In a presentation at the University of Salford on the use of IPA in a clinical context, Dr Virginia Eatough, of Birkbeck University of London, shared a similar view when she said that IPA requires '*dwelling reflectively in the situation, being involved empathically, imaginatively, experientially, to give rise to moments of shared attunement*'.

In this study, the process for conducting IPA has been 'messy' and certainly not as initially planned. The outline process has been as follows:

1. Conducted and transcribed interviews

2. Became familiar with the data – listening to the audios several times, reading and re-reading transcripts.
3. Made some sense of the audios by drawing notes and diagrams on each person and chunking the data – the first order analysis. First identified the phenomenology (how the person experienced 'being') then the hermeneutics (trying to make sense of their reflections) and finally the idiography for each person (what the underlying reasons for time to completion were) for that individual.
4. Conducted cross case analysis (2nd order analysis) to develop threads present in each case.
5. Four superordinate themes and twelve subordinate themes then began to emerge, through subsumption and a summary statement for each person (so a return to the idiographic analysis).
6. Restructured the findings to reflect the themes.
7. Developed an overall Gestalt with four pillars. This showed commonalities rather than generalisations. Convergence and divergence were discussed. This was the 3rd order analysis, i.e. how each person manifested each pillar.
8. Restructured the findings and analysis chapter into three separate chapters (focus group findings and analysis, IPA of timely completers, and IPA of untimely completers). This ensured separation of the focus group as being a pre-study, and enabled the commonalities and differences between the two groups of completers to be drawn out.

The process is presented above as a sequential order, but in reality, the data collection and analysis process during this PhD journey has been extremely iterative, as there was a dynamic relationship between the individual cases and the secondary literature. For example, the primary data led to prompting more secondary literature. The external theory came back in after the first and second order analysis. The theorising is therefore from within as the empirical data leads the process. As meaning was interpreted, and learning occurred, it became necessary to re-orient to make some new sense of it and this led to the process being 'messy'. This hermeneutic circle was growing ever wider, and as Tomkins & Eatough (2017) stated, this meant that it was necessary to embrace more contexts, more perspectives and more possibilities of understanding. A meta-theoretical framework, or Gestalt was eventually developed before

the theoretical standpoints were reviewed again, as presented in the work of Mead (1934). The meta-theoretical framework is therefore the Gestalt with four pillars, the 3rd order analysis constituted by the four super-ordinate themes. The four pillars, Gestalt, or meta-theoretical framework, were presented in terms of their individual manifestations of the theme, for the participants of both groups.

3.8 Research Methods and Choices

The 'Methodological Choices' ring of the research onion refers to the whether the researcher uses mono, multi or mixed methods, each reflecting different philosophical stances – thus impacting on the types of methodological tool used for data collection. The research choice can be a single data collection tool called the 'mono' method or can use two or more data collection tools, which is the 'multi' method. Both of these research choices represent one philosophical paradigm, or position; they fall within one philosophical stance. This is in contrast to 'Mixed' methods, where the researcher combines two or more philosophical positions or stances, to achieve a more rounded picture of a phenomenon. There has been considerable debate in recent years about optimising the validity and reliability of research though using mixed methods, from the two paradigm extremes of positivism and constructivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), yet this study rejects this possibility, since a mixed methods research study would not allow for the depth of analysis and interpretation which was needed for this study, to truly understand the lived experiences of the participants. Therefore, the mono method of IPA, namely pure constructivism and interpretivism in a value laden study, was taken.

3.9 Time Horizons

The time horizons of a study refer to whether the research is conducted over a long period of time (a longitudinal study) or whether it is a snapshot of one particular timeframe (a cross-sectional study). This study is cross-sectional across the sample, conducted in a relatively short

period of time. Longitudinal study was rejected as a time horizon because of the constraints of PhD study, namely time and cost limitations.

3.10 Research Techniques and Procedures

The techniques and procedures chosen for a study are directly related to the philosophical stance, research approach, strategy, and choices made. This study has three main data collection techniques and procedures: literature review, focus group, and interviews. These will now be discussed.

3.10.1 Literature Review

A literature review was conducted to locate and contextualise this study in the secondary literature, and to seek the gaps in order to make an original contribution to knowledge. The scope of the literature review was to investigate the issues surrounding the lived experiences of non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates, in their completion of study. The literature on the experiences of non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates is sparse, and that which is addressed is reductionist in nature and is often US and Australian centric. The UK literature on this field of research is still very much in its infancy, and none has been studied in this context, through this theoretical lens and using a methodology which enables the underlying reasons for untimely completion of doctoral study to emerge based on their lived experience.

3.10.2 Focus Group

The focus group is one of the more widely used data collection tools for collecting qualitative data from a group of people. Focus groups were originally called ‘focused interviews’ by Merton & Kendall (1946, cited in Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015) and have since become part of the social scientists preferred tools in the collection of qualitative data. In this study, one large focus group with eighteen participants was conducted, and is presented as a pre-study to

the main study. The focus group findings are analysed and discussed, using the thematic analysis tool, discussed in Section 3.10.2.1. The justification for use of the focus group in this way will be clarified here, along with the limitations of the methodological tool and particular limitations in this case, explained in Section 3.10.2.2.

Authors such as Stewart & Shamdasani (2015) and Krueger (1994) argue that between 8 and 12 participants is the optimum number for focus groups, and whilst this was acknowledged, the experience of the researcher in teaching large groups of students gave the confidence to run a large group. The aim of the focus group was to initially explore the possible causes of untimely completion and to have discussions around the emerging themes surrounding untimely completion of doctoral study that had been cited in the literature; as part of the main study. However, this was not the final outcome, and reasons for inclusion are also presented here. A focus group handout is shown in Appendix 3.

The sample was a purposive sample, in that the participants were contacted directly by email, and were current full-time, third year, international PhD candidates at the University of Salford. The group consisted of 10 males and 8 females, with ages ranging from 26 to 50 years, from South America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Thirteen of the participants lived with their spouse and children, and five were single. The focus group data were analysed through thematic analysis, discussed below.

3.10.2.1 Thematic Analysis

Although there is no universally accepted definition of thematic analysis, there is some agreement that it is a generic skill used in qualitative data collection and analysis to enable similarities and differences between participants to be established (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Fereday et al., (2006) define thematic analysis as the search for important themes that emerge which are relevant to the phenomenon under study. Braun & Clarke (2006) argue that thematic

analysis is a method in its own right; although, in line with this study, where thematic analysis is the precursor to the main analytical strategy of IPA, this is disputed by Boyatzis (1998) and Holloway & Todres (2003), who suggest that other methods should be used in conjunction with thematic analysis in order to enhance the robustness of the study.

Amaratunga (2002) suggested that an interpretivist approach requires the researcher to understand human experiences within a specific context and this requires qualitative techniques. Thus, the data gathered from the pre-study focus group are qualitative in nature, and as such, thematic analysis is used for the analytical process, to categorise the findings into themes.

Fereday et al (2006) advocate a staged process of thematic analysis in order to demonstrate rigour, with a trail of evidence, where the emerging themes become categories through pattern recognition in the data. During the analysis of the pre-study focus group data, transcripts were read several times to become familiar with the data, as suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006). Fereday et al., (2006) also advocate a staged process of thematic analysis in order to demonstrate rigour, with a trail of evidence, where the emerging themes become categories through pattern recognition in the data. Themes, sub-themes and extracts were reviewed and reorganised until a coherent set of themes could be identified. This meant that the findings, as emergent themes, could be grouped into manageable and meaningful categories.

Whilst it was accepted that there are many explanations of the realities, i.e. multiple realities, of experiences of completing a doctoral study (since this is ultimately a phenomenological study and these are the lived experiences of doctoral candidates themselves) these focus group findings suggested that there were some common themes across the participants, and, most interestingly, the emerging themes had significant concordance with the previously published

literature. However, there were also some limitations in the methodological step of the focus group, and these will now be explained.

3.10.2.2 Limitations of the Focus Group

The first limitation to be acknowledged is that the sample of participants in the focus group was drawn from a population (non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates in the third year of their studies) which is different to that of the main study, where non-native English-speaking doctoral graduates who had completed their study were interviewed. In other words, the lived experiences of the former were different to those of the latter. Therefore, it can be seen that, as a true pilot study, the findings would be of limited validity in relation to the main study, since the participants may not, at that stage in their PhD journey, realise the significance of the writing up period, in terms of difficulties yet to be overcome. The implications of this would have been that the writing up period (as a possible impediment to timely completion) would not have been specifically investigated in relation to the sample.

However, the focus group findings are presented in this thesis as a pre-study, which was completed before the main study of IPA had begun. At that time, the researcher was under a different supervisory team with a different methodological approach. The focus group was set to be the first in a series of focus groups conducted in different universities. The study was, therefore, a more positivistic, reductionist study, with a leaning towards mixed methods research, and an overarching aim to provide solutions to untimely completion of doctoral study. In the event, the focus group simply confirmed the findings of the literature review; the supervisory team changed and whilst there were undercurrents in the focus group that suggested more underlying reasons for untimely completion, in actual fact, the findings

corroborated published literature. Therefore, this in itself would not have produced original research as this had already been explored in the works outlined in the literature review chapter.

The second limitation of the pre-study focus group to be acknowledged is that since the third-year participants were still studying, the researcher's position as English language tutor could have skewed the discussion points as the participants may not have been prepared to 'expose' their English language deficiencies, neither to their peers or to their tutor. However, the participants of the comparative IPA had completed their doctorate and so they no longer had this potentially delicate issue. They were able to freely reflect and talk about the challenges that they had faced on their journey, since they were now graduates.

Thirdly, the methodological tool of a focus group is different to that of the main study, which uses semi-structured narrative style interviews. It is good academic practice to use the same methodological tool in a pilot study as is to be used in the main study, so that the effectiveness of the tool can be properly assessed. However, in this case, the findings are presented as a pre-study rather than a pilot study; the focus group findings were simply included to demonstrate the corroboration between the focus group findings and the secondary literature reviewed. There was no intention to 'test' the methodological tool.

As previously explained, the focus group was intended to be the first of a series of focus groups to provide strategic solutions to the problems of untimely completion. However, following data collection and analysis of the focus group, it became apparent that the emerging themes were supportive of the previously published literature, and that, in fact, there was no original contribution to knowledge. Given that these data were valuable in terms of concordance with previous work, combined with the limitations of focus groups as a methodological tool (for example, participants being influenced by other participants and showing reservation to be open and honest about personal information), plus the particular limitations of this focus group

sample, it was decided to move forward by using the data established from the literature and focus group, to develop the conceptual framework of a comparative IPA study. The researcher had also been sensitive to the suggestion that were indeed undercurrents in the focus group and that a more discreet methodological tool (such as interviews) would be more conducive to participants talking freely in a private space. Therefore, the themes from the literature and focus group were used as the basis for the semi-structured interviews, but only as a guide, in fact the interviewees were given the narrative space to reflect more widely on their journey.

3.10.3 Interviews

Semi-structured, narrative style interviews were conducted for the main study in this thesis, and the research strategy adopted was IPA. Interviews are a common tool in collecting qualitative data, Saunders et al. (2016) define interviews as being a purposeful conversation between two or more people and requiring the researcher to establish a certain level of rapport with the interviewee. It is essential to ask questions in a clear way and to listen carefully to the answer. Interviews can be structured (with set questions), semi structured (with themes or topics) or unstructured.

3.10.3.1 Interview Style

Smith et al., (2009) recommend the use of semi-structured interviews in IPA studies, since this tool allows for the participant to share their narrative and thus gain the rich, deep data that is required. However, the skill of the interviewer is crucial in allowing the interviewee to feel able to narrate their 'story' and open up to their personal reality.

Ten in-depth, semi-structured, narrative style interviews were conducted in this study consisting of two groups of doctoral completers: five participants that had completed within 52, and five participants that had taken longer and were considered to be late completers. These data were then analysed using a comparative IPA strategy, to draw commonalities and

similarities between the two groups of completers. The two groups of participants, with five in each, constitutes a relatively large sample for an IPA study, where even the presence of one lived experience is justifiable as that person's phenomenological truth, since IPA research is not designed to generalise the findings; indeed Smith et al., (2013) discuss the importance of the *existence* of the idiographic understandings for each participant rather than the *incidence* of particular truths.

3.10.3.2 Sample

Study Group 1 was a purposive sample of five non-native English-speaking, recently completed doctoral holders that had completed their study within 52 months. Study Group 2 was also a purposive sample of five non-native English-speaking, recently completed doctoral holders, but that had completed their study in more than 52 months and therefore considered untimely and late completers. Both groups were invited to participate in the study by email, and these participants constituted two 'fairly homogenous' groups (as recommended by Smith et al., 2009). The reason for the choice of a purposive sample is that the researcher already had a connection with the participants, through research training that had taken place; other types of sampling would have been inappropriate since these could not have guaranteed that the participants would fit the sample frame and be willing to share their lived experience. In addition, the advantage of the participants being newly completed is that recently completed graduates have not been exposed to the sanitised version of memory (Lewis, 2000) that prevents the true lived experience being elicited, rather the memory is fresh in the mind. The choice of the sample being non-native English-speaking was because this relates directly to the research aim and objectives. Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) stated that a small sample is the most effective for gaining the kind of depth associated with IPA studies. By exploring and analysing the lived experiences of these two groups of non-native English-speaking doctoral

holders through this phenomenological strategy, rich, deep data were uncovered as to the core, underlying reasons for timely and late completion of their doctoral study.

The relevant demographic information relating to the participants of the study is shown in the following tables.

Table 3.3 Participant Demographics of Study Group 1

Pseudonym	Age	Number of Children	Country of Origin	In the UK alone	Completion Time (months)
Stephen	32	1	Nigeria	Yes	52
Hannah	46	1	Iraq	No	48
Sarah	30s	0	Iraq	Yes	48
Beth	40s	3	Libya	No	48
Ruth	40s	0	Iraq	Yes	48

Table 3.4 Participant Demographics of Study Group 2

Pseudonym	Age	Number of Children	Country of Origin	In the UK alone	Completion Time (months)
Tim	35	2	Indonesia	No	60
Archie	43	4	Saudi Arabia	Yes	58
John	42	4	Libya	No	56
Phillip	36	1	Egypt	No	60
Meg	53	4	Libya	No	72

As explained previously, the participants for the interviews were invited by individual email, based on the researcher's knowledge of particular students' completion time and circumstances. It was, therefore, a purposive sampling technique. Following the initial

invitation email, which included a Participant Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form (See Appendix 4) the interviews were arranged. The Participant Information Sheet includes information about the study and about the crucial issue of confidentiality. The Informed Consent Form includes information about how participants could withdraw from the study at any time.

3.10.3.3 Confidentiality

Since this study was conducted at the University of Salford, the researcher's work place, it was crucial that confidentiality of the interview participants in particular was maintained at all times and to the highest possible standard. Once participants agreed to participate in the study that person was assigned a pseudonym and all documents were given the pseudonym name, rather than their real name. Since the data is sensitive and private, it was crucial that the person's identity remained confidential. All names and contact details, together with the primary data itself (audio recordings, transcripts and notes) were stored on a password-protected laptop and only the researcher and supervisor know the real identity of the participants. Data were not, therefore, used in a way which could identify the participant. The files will be deleted after 3 years of completion of this study.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the choices made about how this research was designed. The study used the conceptual framework of comparative IPA; in this case to employ a style of narrative inquiry to enrich understanding of the lived experiences in the doctoral journey as a meaningful whole, and to draw commonalities and differences between the two study groups. The three key areas of IPA, namely, phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography, were explained in this chapter, together with the justifications for choices made.

It has used the ‘Research Onion’ (Saunders et al., 2009, 2012, 2016) as a logical structure, to describe the considerations and choices made, in order to achieve the aim and objectives of the study.

In terms of the philosophical stance and research approach taken, this study has a constructivist phenomenological ontology, a hermeneutically interpretivist epistemology, a value-laden axiology with reflexivity at the core; and has an inductive and exploratory approach. It thus focuses on depth and richness of data from a small sample, rather than breadth of data across a broader sample.

The study was conducted as a cross-sectional study, using a mono qualitative method of inquiry. A literature review, focus group, and semi-structured narrative style interviews were the research techniques and procedures employed in this study.

The next chapter will present the findings of the pre-study focus group, analysed through thematic analysis.

Chapter 4: Focus Group Findings

4.1 Chapter Introduction

The previous chapter detailed the methodological strategy adopted in this study, so that the aim and objectives could be achieved. In this chapter, the pre-study focus group findings are presented and analysed through thematic analysis. One large focus group with eighteen third-year non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates was conducted, and is presented as a pre-study in this chapter, prior to the main study.

4.2 Procedure

The doctoral candidates were given a handout (shown in Appendix 5) which contained questions about their personal circumstances, and the themes identified in the literature that were thought to contribute to negative experiences of being a doctoral candidate and ultimately, untimely completion. These potential themes were discussed in the focus group, and the recordings were transcribed verbatim for analysis using thematic analysis techniques. The verbatim transcripts, researcher's notes on the sessions, and participants' notes on the handouts were analysed through several stages of thematic analysis: namely, reading and re-reading, making notes, then combining possible reasons into groups, to later consolidate into themes.

Through this thematic analysis of the focus group transcripts and notes, six themes were identified, which closely aligned to the secondary literature. These are: financial concerns and worries about the cost of living; work commitments (paid work and research projects); the supervisor relationship; family commitments; administration of the doctoral process itself; and research & language training provided by the university. Unsurprisingly, these themes have been recorded in the secondary literature as potential barriers to doctoral completion (Dinham and Scott, 1999; Pauley, Cunningham and Toth, 1999; Park, 2005; Rudd, 1985; Phillips and

Pugh, 2010; Lovitts, 2001; Lee, 2012; Taylor, 2012; Elliot et al., 2016; Delamont et al., 2000). Each of the six themes will now be discussed in turn.

4.3 Financial Concerns

The first theme that was established was the overwhelming concern about finances. This was expressed by 17 of the 18 participants. The 17 that expressed concern about their financial situation were fully funded candidates, from their employers in their home country. They all have salaries paid to them, but as one candidate explained, it is not enough to live in the UK:

'My salary is fine in Indonesia, it is enough for me and my family to live on comfortably, but here in the UK, it only just covers the rent.'

Another problem expressed by three students from Libya was that their salaries are often not paid on time and sometimes months can go by without receiving any money.

'I had to wait four months for my salary to reach me, they did not pay it when they should and I was struggling, really struggling'

The political uncertainty and legacy of decades of conflict were attributed to this, and whilst students were glad to be in the UK, in what they perceived to be a safe environment, these financial concerns impacted on how they lived and studied.

Similarly, another student explained the guilt that he felt that his family were living in difficult circumstances in the UK:

'It's difficult to concentrate on my PhD when my family have no money and I should be supporting them.'

Other concerns about money were also raised, such as the inability to pay for conferences and travel to collect primary data, to purchase necessary software and other materials, and this could slow their progress and thus, affect their study.

'I needed a book that is not in the library, so I asked my friend from Saudi Arabia to buy it for me because she has money. Everything is so expensive here.'

Financial worries were having an impact on 17 of the students' well-being; they were finding that it had, at times, really impacted on their study. If a student's basic needs are not being met, in that they may not have the required necessities of life, then it is likely to impact on their other human needs, as in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, described in the literature (see Section 2.5.1).

4.4 Work Commitments

Linked to the need for more money to live, thirteen students had found paid work, in restaurants, take-away restaurants, and shops. This was inevitably paid in cash at the minimum wage rate, or less.

'I work in a restaurant five nights a week to help pay for food and things for my family, so I'm sometimes tired during the day, I think this affects my PhD.'

One student has been committed to a research project with her supervisor, in order to earn an income, and this has meant that her PhD study had suffered as a consequence:

'working on a research project has affected the progression of my PhD – I thought I would be much further ahead than this by now.'

There is agreement with this in the literature in that several authors, such as Hwang et al., (2015); van der Reest (2017); Pauley, Cunningham and Toth (1999); Park, (2005); and Dinham

and Scott (1999) have cited financial concerns and the need to work during the study (see Section 2.6.3) as a barrier to having the time to complete.

4.5 Supervisor Relationship

Another theme to emerge is supervision, and this has been well documented in the literature, by authors such as Lee (2012), Taylor (2012), and Elliot et al., (2016). Participants expressed feelings of self-doubt and that they were not good enough, especially at academic writing, and were sometimes unsure what their supervisor was asking them to do. This also links with self-determination theory, in terms of students feeling intrinsically motivated (Deci et al., 1991), thus choosing to try to work through the problems, yet feeling unsure of how to actually go about it, for example:

'I still don't feel good enough to be here, my supervisor makes me feel bad sometimes'.

The quality of the supervision in terms of the topic knowledge can also cause students to stall, some students talked about their supervisor not having the knowledge in their particular subject area to adequately guide them at PhD level. For example, one student said:

'I'm happy with my supervisor now, but my last supervisor was terrible – he didn't know my topic area at all and didn't help me'

and

'the knowledge of my supervisor is not as I expected when I came here'.

This can be a disabler to progress, since motivation of student and supervisor is difficult to maintain if the topic area is unclear from either party. Having a supervisor that is knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the topic, motivated and supportive to the student, can

help timely progression and completion, as the student feels supported and safe, as one student commented:

'My supervisor is key to my progress, she has made all the difference giving me a positive experience, I couldn't have done it without her'.

The supervisor having 'too many' students was also cited as a reason for untimely completion, since the supervisor was not perceived to have as much time to devote to each student, allowing for drift in progress.

'My supervisor has too many students, the number should be limited so that he could give us more time'.

This was also discussed in relation to time taken to receive feedback:

'I would like to have more prompt feedback, by the time I get my work back I have wasted a lot of time'.

4.6 Family Life

A strong theme to emerge was the time needed to devote to their family life; especially when this visit is their first to the UK and they may never have experienced living in a foreign country. Dependents may not have the language skills to cope with school teachers, doctors, etc., as expressed by one participant:

'my wife doesn't speak English and so I have to help her with health and education matters'

Cultural barriers may also affect the PhD candidate, one female felt that she should be at home looking after her family:

'I have four children and I should spend time with them, not study all day and all night'.

Family illness and bereavement were also raised as barriers to timely completion; one participant juggles looking after her disabled husband and child with her PhD study. Conflict and unrest in the student's home country causes anxiety and stress, even though their immediate family may be safe, extended family and friends could be affected. For example, one participant said:

'I lost my cousin in the war, I wasn't really close to him, but my mum was devastated'.

The five participants that were here studying alone also expressed anxiety about their families, in terms of leaving them behind. Homesickness and missing their loved ones affected their personal productivity, and so affected their progression rate, except for one participant, who said:

'I need to finish this PhD as soon as I can, so that I can get back to my wife and kids'.

4.7 Administration

The administration of the student journey has received some attention as a possible inhibitor to successful progression (for example, in Australia with Dinham and Scott, 1999; and Park, 2005 in the UK), with some HEIs adopting traffic light systems or software packages to help monitor progression. Whilst Park (2005) warns of the dangers of taking a 'managerialist approach' there was some consensus amongst participants that this helped them to keep to their targets, thus progressing and completing on time. One participant explicitly commented that tighter monitoring had helped her to progress:

'Monitoring and tracking my progress is a driver to meet my targets'.

The tighter regulation by UKVI (UKVI, 2019) has also had an effect on research management, since PGR students must have a monthly meeting with their supervisor – and this meeting is formally recorded and signed by both student and supervisor. There was consensus amongst the focus group participants that this was effective in ensuring that there was regular contact with the supervisor. As one participant said:

'more frequent supervision helps me to maintain motivation, if I have a deadline, it makes me do the work'.

4.8 Research and Language Training

All participants agreed that training was a key part of their development and helped with maintaining motivation, minimising feelings of isolation and creating a support network of people that were in the same position, thereby having empathy for the student. This was reflected in a number of the comments made, such as:

'Language and skills training are very important for my progression' and *'the training sessions are a great opportunity to self-reflect and improve'.*

It was suggested that the training events were an opportunity, rather than to learn from the session itself, but to mix with other doctoral candidates and thus learn from each other, and this was more valuable; the training event in effect gave the conversations more legitimacy.

'I enjoy attending the training sessions as we get to speak to other PhD students.'

This suggests that students may well enjoy the sessions for different reasons than intended, rather than finding them particularly useful in their own right, and this was a point of interest

for the main study, possibly confirming Kearns & Gardiner's (2011) argument, that 'advanced displacement' activities can really be more subtle forms of procrastination.

4.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented and analysed the findings from the pre-study focus group, through thematic analysis. The pre-study focus group explored the general thoughts about difficulties in completing a doctorate, with third year PhD candidates. The findings drawn out from the pre-study closely aligned to the secondary literature, in terms of the factors that doctoral candidates perceived as being pertinent to completion of study. In other words, the findings corroborated the secondary literature and the original intentions became obsolete. However, there were indications that more underlying reasons for untimely completion of study were present, and that these potentially 'delicate' issues were not being drawn out in a focus group setting, raising the possibility of a changed mental wellbeing and personal status affecting time to completion. For example, in Section 4.6, one participant talked of her feelings that she should be at home with her family; her self-identity as a full-time student did not sit well with her cultural identity as a mother, and this potentially affected her mental wellbeing. Also, in Section 4.8, the discussions around language training and other training sessions showed that there were possibly deeper meanings around the purpose of attending training, such as to overcome loneliness and isolation. These nuanced discussions, together with the review of the secondary literature, gave the foundation which led to the adoption of a comparative IPA in the main study, which will now be introduced.

Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis of Study Group 1 (Timely Completers)

5.1 Chapter Introduction

The previous chapter presented and analysed the findings from the pre-study focus group, using thematic analysis. This chapter presents the findings and analysis of Study Group 1 (SG1), which consists of five participants that had completed their doctorate in a timely manner of within 52 months. In-depth, semi-structured, narrative style interviews are analysed using IPA techniques.

The participants of SG1 are each firstly introduced, in terms of their personal background information. Next, for each participant, their phenomenological claims and hermeneutic sense making are presented through four super-ordinate themes which emerged through the IPA, demonstrating convergence and divergence between participants and previously published literature. The final section of each participant's findings presents the (third order) idiographic analysis, where the underlying reasons for timely completion of doctoral study are discussed, for each individual participant.

The participants of SG1 were a purposively selected homogenous sample, in that they had all completed their full-time PhD study in the previous 12 months; they were all non-native English speakers; they had all travelled to the UK for the primary purpose of study (not previously been living in the UK); and they had all completed their doctorate within 52 months. The participants were interviewed using a semi-structured approach, with the opportunity to discuss their lived experience in a narrative style way.

5.2 Stephen

Stephen was a thirty-two year-old married man, here studying alone, his wife and child were back home in Stephen's country of origin, Nigeria. He had been married for 7 years and his

child was 6 years old. His job was as a lecturer back in Nigeria, and he was being paid by his employer during his study. He had held this position for 8 years and was expecting to receive a promotion on his return. He completed his PhD in 52 months.

5.2.1 Stephen's Personal Drive

Initially, Stephen had been extrinsically motivated (as per Deci & Ryan, 2010) to come to the UK to complete his PhD because of a work requirement in his university in Nigeria. He would have been unable to progress his career without it, and so the extrinsic motivation was a situation of what Deci et al., (1991) describe as 'compliance'. He had chosen the UK rather than staying in Nigeria because he felt it would be a fairer system in the UK, as demonstrated in the following quote.

> *'It is a requirement in my university… to want to teach in the system you need a PhD and then because I'm interested in a lot of academic discussions, a lot of academic debates, and erm you know to actually add to your level of exposure, level of understanding, emotion to help people with one form or another that's what motivated me to come to here where I feel there would be a level playing ground.'*

However, after arriving in Salford and starting his PhD, his motivation clearly shifted to focusing on his family back in Nigeria, and his desperate need to get back home to his young wife and child. His previously extrinsic motivation had become an intrinsic motivation – he could not return home to his family without the PhD and so completing it meant he could be with his wife and child. The focus of compliance with his university's requirement for teaching staff to hold a doctorate had been lost in the more important aspect of his family life. His self-determination had increased to the point where he was operating at what Tremblay et al., (2009) describe as 'optimal functioning'.

His faith had helped him to keep going and his relationship with God was extremely important to him; he felt that God had required him to do this and so he must persist and do it. This is in line with Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw (2012) who found that doctoral candidates have to make personal sacrifices in order to persist in doctoral study. Whilst he had been motivated at the start to complete a PhD because of career aspirations, this had quickly changed to realising that now he was here, he just had to get it done as quickly as possible, as this would please God and would mean he could return home to his wife and child.

Stephen's family life had therefore been a double-edged sword. He had chosen to leave his wife and child back in Nigeria, yet he did not want to be here alone, and so along with his strong faith, it had ultimately been a motivator to complete. He carried the burden of expectation; his family were immensely proud of him being a doctoral candidate and were looking forward to him returning home as a Doctor of Philosophy. However, Stephen's lived experience of being a doctoral candidate had been a lonely one outside of university; apart from his worship, he had nothing. He missed his wife and child terribly, and even his faith and his friendships in university could not make up for that. These sacrifices had led to Stephen's overwhelming need to complete his study as soon as possible and he completely dedicated himself to his work; his intrinsic motivation, self-determination and persistence drove him to complete in 52 months.

5.2.2 Stephen's Self-Identity

Stephen received his salary every month from his employer in Nigeria. He then sent back some money to his wife and child, leaving him with very little here to survive; his financial and power status were compromised. He had found identifying as a student a difficult transition when he arrived in the UK, since he had a very different life back home, where he had relative wealth. When talking about his existence in the UK, he said:

'I manage my resources within my confines. It's a time of sacrifice, it's a time of, you know, controlling your finances, of controlling the way you spend. But at the end of the day, I am living as a poor man. I have lost my…well my rights to live as… a professional.'

There is a daily financial struggle for Stephen, an important factor that was also found by Pauley, Cunningham and Toth (1999; cited in Park 2005), Booth and Satchell, (1996), and Dinham and Scott (1999). Stephen does not have enough to buy luxuries such as meals and drinks at the university (linking with the findings on material differences of candidates by Hockey, 1994), or to eat out and consequently he sometimes feels quite isolated. His friendships in the study room had helped him, they often brought in food to share, but ultimately, his lack of money was a difficult burden to bear, since Stephen is a professional earning a salary and felt he should not be '*living as a poor man'*. He did not want to work in a part-time job here because he thought it would make him take longer to complete, so he had spent his time studying and praying, as evidenced in the following comment.

'I don't really do anything else but work on my thesis. I go to (place of worship) and that's it.'

The lack of money was causing Stephen to feel low, and isolated to the point of loneliness. He felt that he had lost his '*rights*' to live as a professional, as this had effectively weakened his financial and power status. Whereas at home he had lived in relative luxury, here he was struggling to even buy a coffee. His lived experience of being a PhD candidate was being negatively affected by his perception that he was '*living as a poor man'*.

Stephen also talked about what he knew of the administrative processes to help PhD candidates complete the admin side of the candidacy. He knew about the normal timelines and that he was running close to being considered late in the process. This had been a source of concern for

him but he had tried to complete each stage as quickly as he could, and had felt a sense of achievement on completion of each stage.

'I had to submit my report, my second year assessment, and it was late, but I couldn't do it before then…It is stressful (he laughs)…but I felt better after, it was like, wow, I can do this now.'

The research environment for Stephen is made up of a desk and chair in a shared office, storage cupboard, laptop and second screen. These physical elements are provided by the university and Stephen considered them to be important. He was happy with the study room where his desk was located and he had made friends; this environment had certainly helped Stephen to cope with his loneliness outside of university.

'Giving you your own personal space gives you a sense of belonging. It helps you to organise yourself. It helps you to push on your own. It's very, very important, it is not hot-desking where nobody has a fixed, particular place, so when you come you have access to the system when it is not occupied. So, when you get this space, I think it is very, very good. In my own case, when you look at it, I have a double screen. My other screen, I don't know, it truly encourages me to do a lot of work.'

He had attended language training and other research training provided by the university and whilst he had found these helpful in the preparation of his thesis, he still felt that his language ability was not as it should have been.

'English is not my first language and I've got to understand that I think in my native language which is just, is just, it kills me, it kills me. I have the point, I have the stuff, I want to put it down but sometimes when I put it down it's not

right and it just makes me wonder why am I burning my energy about this whole thing and it makes me sad, very, very sad, very, very sad; you've read so much and you want to do it in your own way, and you want to write it and there's a serious barrier.'

Stephen's struggle with academic writing in English had caused him to question his own ability. He acknowledged that he could not articulate difficult concepts and this caused him to feel 'very sad'. He had attended all the training sessions on academic writing provided by the University and had persisted in drafting and redrafting his thesis until it was satisfactory.

Networking was important to Stephen, especially since his university life was all that he had here. Stephen was naturally a social person and back home he enjoyed a full and busy social life with his family, his colleagues, and other members of his faith community. His expectations of how his experience of doctoral study would be were very different from the reality, similar to the findings of Elliot and Kobayashi, (2018), who concluded that cross-cultural facets of doctoral study affect the journey.

'Well, erm, I am the type that feels ideas, which, you appreciate, you learn from other people. I learn in an environment from back home where I believe in people, I interact with people, you know, that kind of a thing, because the course of interaction, it helps you, it improves you, when we came here to do the PhD they say it is a lonely journey but I decided to crack into that and say 'no'. This PhD cannot be a lonely journey, because networking is very, very important.'

5.2.3 Stephen's Wellbeing

Stephen has a strong faith and he explained that this means a lot to him in his day-to-day life. He goes to church nearly every day to give thanks and to pray for his family, and he said that this is a great source of comfort to him in difficult times as well as in good times. He explained

that this has really made him stay in Salford and get on with the PhD, because he believes that this is what was required of him. His personal resilience was strengthened because of his faith.

'The way your mind begins to beat you and you say… you know… begin to ask yourself why. You see, there is one thing that has kept me…you see, my faith in God is very, very fundamental. My faith in God is what has kept me, that's the truth of the matter it is just my faith in God has kept me going.'

Despite this personal resilience due to his strong faith, Stephen had struggled with his mental health during the PhD journey, and had found it to be a very tough life to lead. He used the metaphor of it as like travelling in the wilderness.

'It has been tough. It is not a constant life...Life's not constant. My family are all there and I am here. There's been times of ups and times of downs, yeah of course. Most of the time you are up is when you get a lot of support, and it encourages you…but erm, if you are low you struggle to do things on your own and you're not getting anybody's support and you're completely lost because, erm, the PhD journey is just like travelling in the wilderness, you need someone to guide you, and when you're not guided it becomes terrible, you know, depressing, and it just makes you feel like you're just struggling with the whole thing.'

Stephen accepts that life has its ups and downs and that it is natural to feel low, but his narrative of his experience showed the depth of struggle that he had survived, as shown in the following quote:

'You cannot be happy all the time. Anybody that's going to tell you they are always happy, misrepresent, that's a lie, no. Life cannot be rosy all through. A

lot of people want the roses but they don't want the thorns. But it's my faith, because I believe in God, I believe strongly in God. And he gives me instruction. He says, 'this is it', 'this is that', and this research I have completed, it's not a person I have talked to, it is God. Sometimes God gives you inspiration - do this, do that, do this, do that - and when you do it, you believe. That's the truth of the matter.'

Stephen clearly indicated the strength of his relationship with God and how this had held him together during the difficult times. Stephen referred to his wife as his '*little sweetheart'*, but this seemed to infer that his wife was childlike and unable to support his mental wellbeing. He was a proud man who saw his responsibility as being very much the strong male influence in the family; what Brittan (1989) described as gender identity being entwined with emotional processes, affecting power play in relationships. Being in the UK without them had caused him to suffer in almost grief-like proportions, and only his faith had given him enough personal resilience to keep him mentally well enough so that he was able to complete the study.

5.2.4 Stephen's Support Network

Stephen had come (alone) to the UK for the first time, it was also the first time that he had even been out of his country of origin, Nigeria. When he arrived at the University of Salford, it was not how he had expected it to be. There were no people around and he felt quite lonely, he said for quite a while.

'I went to a (place of worship) near the university and tried to speak to some people. One guy, kind of…well smiled at me but that was it, I felt really on my own in that first week.'

Stephen explained that it had taken a while to settle in, in line with acculturation described by Ye (2006) and Elliot et al., (2016), and it had taken time make some friends in the study room,

but the loneliness was the overriding feeling in the first weeks, in common with the findings from Elliot et al., (2016). It was only that he had left behind such huge expectations, leaving his young wife and young child that he felt committed to carry on.

'Every morning I leave home for this place and then I go back in the evening, … because I know there is a target, and because I know my funding would definitely stop somewhere along the lines so I worked tirelessly so that I would not be caught up with a lot of the financial issues. I don't really do anything else but work on my thesis. I go to (place of worship) and that's it.'

The sense of commitment to his family was immense, as manifested in his behaviours in trying to complete as quickly as possible. Stephen's lived experience was that of loneliness at being here without his wife and child and this had meant that his study had been the barrier to getting back to them, therefore, he needed to remove the barrier by completing the study.

'If you know you have something at stake it moves you. The mere thought in my head that oh, (wife) and (child) are alone, kills me. And I can't afford to abandon them back home, so I have to do it and get back home. That kind of a thing. And the thing is that when you are not seeing a problem, physically, you tend to, you know, you tend to, you know, dissipate it just like that, oh - it can take care of itself, that kind of a thing. When you know that deep inside you that there is something, so something must be taking you back. So you have to work hard, work hard and harder so that you can move on. That's it. In the first week I didn't know what to do…should I go home and tell her that I can't do it? (He sighs)…but I must start and try at least. It affects me many times in a day. I am sad about it but I know I must do it…they want me to do it.'

His sadness at leaving his young wife and child were almost too much to bear. He almost broke down at the memory of his young child, when showing me a photograph. This shows the raw emotion of leaving behind his family and how it impacted on his study in that Stephen really wanted to complete so that he could get back home. He needed to reconnect with his support network at home and his visits were all too infrequent. An extract from the transcript to illustrate this, was in relation to going home at the end of his second year:

'I went back home last year 'coz my mother was ill and I wanted to see them all anyway. My sisters were there too and even though my mother was ill, it was nice to see everyone, best of all, (child). And right now, I just want to go home because my dad is ill, my dad is ill so I have to go back home. I intend to go home very, very fast, so I can see my dad and I can see how I can give him the best treatment I can ever afford to. It definitely did, you know, make a difference… that my family are not with me…they are important to me, I worry about them especially when (child) is ill or not sleeping.'

In terms of supervision, Stephen had had two supervisors, after the first one left the university. He had had what he described as a good relationship with his first supervisor, they seemed to understand each other's work patterns and he had been extremely supportive in the early days, but this was not the case for the second supervisor.

'The 1st supervisor I had was good, was really good. In the first meeting I planned what I was going to say, how I was going to say it, and well just about everything about that first meeting, I couldn't just go in and you know… (long pause) I knew I had to speak properly. He, erm, at the beginning he literally picked articles for me to get me to read, so he was with me all through, he was giving me a lot of materials, he was literally spoon-feeding me somehow, After a

while he said, OK, he allowed me to do certain things on my own. You know, he trusted me that I would deliver. I related to him so well.'

Unfortunately for Stephen, his supervisor moved to a more senior position in another university, and this left him without a supervisor for a while, which was extremely destabilising to Stephen. He felt unsupported during this period and reflected that he had lost valuable time, both in lamenting on the past and in trying to forge a new relationship with a new supervisor. The relationship that had been built up with the first supervisor had been lost and Stephen was acutely aware of this:

'But, well… the 1st supervisor… he was leaving, he was leaving for another university. But because I was in the 2nd year I couldn't move with him… So I had to stay back. You understand the problems that could come up. The fear of money laundering that could come up, securities, my school visa and other things, and the completion of the PhD, I felt I should really stay back. So when I started with the 2nd supervisor, because of his style, and the way he does his thing, I just struggled, you know…the pattern in which he does his own things is different. For example, my previous supervisor always asked when you come, you should be delivering something at the next meeting. So there was an outline. And then the other one, you would now come there, and then there was no need to present the particular thing. So we are starting a new relationship - that familiarity and that kind of thing is gone, and we have to put it aside to face the work because the target is to deliver the PhD at the end of the day, to deliver the research.'

Stephen struggled to come to terms with this change of supervisor and this had caused his progress to slow, meaning that his second-year assessment was late. The differences in style and personality had affected him.

'The truth of the matter is that new supervisors definitely might not be comfortable with the way somebody has been working. If you do not belong to the same school of thought, then you try to adjust as well. So that process of adjusting, to the pattern, and to the way, this other person does his work is different from the other. So I had to start bringing in plenty more techniques of trying to shape that, trying to do that, which lasted for 3 months.'

Stephen had become more tolerant of the new working ways of his second supervisor, by adjusting his own working style and practices to suit the new situation he found himself in. He was not particularly happy about this, but his faith and sense of duty and commitment had meant he had had to learn patience and tolerance.

5.2.5 Stephen's Underlying Reasons for Timely Completion

The underlying reasons why Stephen was able to complete in 52 months can be attributed to several interconnected themes. His intrinsic motivation to complete so that he could return home to his wife and child was a powerful driver in his daily life. In addition, whilst his original self-identity, as a social, professional, family man, had been compromised and his sense of status had altered, this had served as a positive motivating factor, in that he wanted to complete as quickly as possible in order to return home to his 'normal' life. He was unhappy with his status as a solitary student and wanted to 'correct' this as soon as possible. His lack of money (due to sending most of his salary back to his family) had caused him to feel inadequate with a sense of weakness in his power and financial status, and causing a certain amount of anxiety ('*I live within my confines'*) and so completing the doctorate became the only goal in his life. In other words, his immediate family (and all the associated lifestyle choices) being back in Nigeria caused a deepened intrinsic motivation, and he felt pressure that he could not complete any quicker. He carried the burden of expectation from his parents particularly, only his faith

in God had strengthened his resolve to persist through '*the wilderness'* of the PhD journey. His frustration at his lack of English language ability was apparent and this had compounded his perceived weakened self-efficacy and ultimately his self-esteem ('*it kills me'*) yet he had taken every opportunity to engage with the University training courses on offer, in order to develop his academic English so that he could complete the thesis. He felt sad and lonely at the temporary loss of his close family, but accepted that this was a time of '*sacrifice*' and had managed to complete in 52 months, despite these difficulties, showing his self-determination to complete and his self-persistence during the struggle.

5.3 Hannah

Hannah was a 46 year-old divorced female, living in Salford with her teenage daughter. She was a very ambitious, well-respected academic in her home university in Iraq and wanted to complete the PhD so that she could get a promotion and progress her career. She had taken 48 months to complete her PhD. Hannah was divorced and she had found it difficult to adjust to a new life in the UK without a husband or indeed her family. Her daughter had come to the UK after Hannah had already been here for a year, and this had been a difficult battle as her ex-husband had fought for custody of the child and certainly did not want her to come to the UK. Hannah had also struggled with the language barrier and had consequently attended many training sessions throughout the PhD journey.

5.3.1 Hannah's Personal Drive

Hannah was extremely motivated and had been motivated throughout the study; this motivation had been a strong intrinsic motivation combined with some extrinsic motivation. She had had some personal circumstances that had seriously affected her ability to continue, but in terms of the study, she was highly motivated to complete. The intrinsic motivation could have been attributed to Hannah's history, she had met her ex-husband whilst lecturing and he was one of

her students. She had always considered herself as a career woman first and foremost, maybe because this came first in her life, her marriage had come second. She had a point to prove in completing the PhD – to herself and to her ex-husband. Hannah reflected that her strong personality had helped her through the difficult times in the PhD journey:

'My personality is strong and that is important. The time was hard, I didn't sleep much, I worked. Even when I cooked in the morning, I was thinking about my work.'

Although Hannah lived alone for the first year, and thereafter with her daughter, her family back in her home country were in daily contact with her and were a constant source of encouragement and support. This helped her drive to complete the study.

'My family are very proud of me and that helped me to finish in the end. They said to me don't think about anything else, just carry on and finish.'

Hannah was naturally an enthusiastic person and her exuberance was felt by all around her. She was able to motivate other doctoral candidates and these relationships also helped her to maintain her own motivation.

5.3.2 Hannah's Self-Identity

Hannah articulated herself that she had suffered from 'culture shock' when she first arrived in the UK and that she felt extremely lost in her new environment. She had found it hard to do even simple things, such as take a bus or get food shopping. Her self-identity as an independent and confident person was under threat, compounded by her being alone. She felt uncomfortable travelling to the UK without a husband or family, and thought that people would be judging her as she travelled alone, as can be seen in the following extract:

'I travel alone without my daughter, it was very difficult to be alone, it is not good in our culture. A lot of people ask me why you travel alone without your husband and your family but thank God I had passed this hurdle and am here safely.'

Back in Iraq, Hannah was seen as being an important part of her family – she was seen as strong and independent, and her siblings relied on her for emotional and financial support. In her job, she was also seen as '*clever and important'*, and because of this new environment, she felt completely lost in the first six months of the PhD. When Hannah reflected on this, she became upset at the memories of that time and began to weep. She had been questioning her decision to come to the UK during the first few months of her study and this had affected her progress on the PhD. For example, she said:

'After 6 months…I asked myself a lot… a lot.. why I did this study… I speak about this with (supervisor)….I said please help me. I can't do this.'

At that time, she was full of self-doubt and did not feel that she could continue. Her inability to communicate as effectively in English as in Arabic, and her daughter being back in Iraq, were making her feel that she had made the wrong decision to come to the UK. Only the support of her supervisor had pulled her through the first few months, which were the most difficult period of her life.

Her identity as an independent woman had also caused her some distress when collecting primary data in her home country. Her culture was such that a woman should be accompanied by a husband or brother, and this was not possible for her at the time of data collection.

'I was alone, so a lot of challenges like when I interviewed high ranking officers, it was difficult to enter a place with all men. I found it hard, and a strong personality was important.'

Hannah was unsure of herself here in the UK, without her family to support her, and even simple things, such as shopping, were difficult. For example, Hannah had struggled to adjust to living without her daughter and wider family, and this had been the case for the first year of her PhD. At the end of the first year, Hannah returned to Iraq to try and bring her daughter back to the UK with her, and this had been very difficult because the environment was insecure with violence and bombs being a daily occurrence, and Hannah reflected on this having affected her psychological state. She had also questioned herself in terms of her ability to be a parent; her ex-husband had diminished her confidence to zero. When Hannah returned to the UK with her daughter, there had been new challenges for Hannah, for example, she said:

'I had to pick up my daughter from school … I was alone … I knew no-one. I didn't know the procedures here, what to do, how to do things.'

In summary, Hannah had found the experience of being here as a divorced woman difficult as her self-identity changed from being a strong, confident, independent woman in Iraq, to being an unsure mother and PhD student on a tight budget in a foreign country.

5.3.3 Hannah's Wellbeing

For Hannah, the struggle to complete her study with the difficulties throughout the journey had caused her to feel very low at times and also her physical health had suffered as a result of the pressure. She had suffered physical pain in her right shoulder and upper arm, and although she had sought medical advice for this, she had not had relief and the pain had only lessened when she completed the study. Other PhD candidates perceived Hannah to be mentally strong, she had an infectious smile and always seemed to be positive. However, Hannah had suffered the

loss of both her parents during her PhD and this had taken a toll on her mental wellbeing. Her friends had helped her to keep going and she was also determined to demonstrate the attributes of persistence to her daughter, when times were very difficult for her, as can be seen in the following extract, when Hannah was talking about the loss of her parents.

'I had some friends to support me when it was really bad. I could not have predicted this or planned this. I can't study when these things happen. But still when you have a target when you have a big aim, how you present yourself is important. At the low points my family always help me, I had to continue.'

The grief that Hannah had felt had pervaded every aspect of her life, and she had struggled to keep going with her study.

'You don't imagine…you don't put these things in your plan…We have to ….be brave be strong. But I found my friends and my family supported me a lot. My social relations mean a lot. When you can't manage it, they help you to carry on.'

Whilst Hannah was reflecting on this time, she began to cry; her sadness at their passing had affected her stability and security, her foundations had been taken away.

'Before my IA exam, they told me my father passed away. I couldn't see him I couldn't help him. But still I had to submit my report I had to do my exam and before my final submission they told me my mother has passed away. So also I was shocked I couldn't open anything. But I remember her words, ok we can .....er… we can carry on with our life and find support from our family, it's very important. So these outside difficulties affected me.'

Hannah was sobbing at the loss of her parents, which had caused her mental wellbeing to be shaken to the core. She had struggled to continue without her parents' kind words and support

being part of her everyday life. All she had now were the memories of how they had been supportive and proud parents, but now that she had completed her study she had been unable to *hear* the words from them. In some ways, her reflection appeared to be helping her to process her grief, for example, she said

'I hope my dad and my mum are proud of me ... I think they are.'

She realised what a difficult experience completing the PhD study had been and had not voiced these feelings before. She had just carried on working and supporting her daughter at school and home, and being positive at university.

The custody battle for her daughter had also been difficult during the first year of her PhD, when she was alone in Salford. Her ex-husband had wanted their daughter to stay in Iraq and cited poor parenting as Hannah had come to the UK without her, thus her daughter was refused a visa. This had affected Hannah's mental wellbeing as it was contrary to her reality of wanting her daughter to have the UK experience and escape not only her ex-husband, but also the war and terrorism in Iraq. She explained that she could not eat or sleep when this was going on, and her description of this time seemed to have affected her mental wellbeing over a long period of time.

Similar to Stephen, Hannah's faith had helped her to live through each day when times were very difficult for her; she recalled how she had strengthened her relationship with God as a result of being alone. This psychological aid had enabled her to see beyond the immediate problems and to continue, for example, she said:

'My faith is important to me. In our holy book they give us advice how we can be strong how we can carry on. There are a lot of stories about the difficulties we may face and how to behave and how it encourages us.'

Hannah had also initially struggled with the English language; both academically and socially. When she had first arrived in the UK, she talked about the shock that she had felt when she could not understand what was being said to her and was unable to answer. This had caused some panic in Hannah as she was here alone and facing considerable cultural limitations as a divorcee.

'I couldn't speak, I knew English well but I couldn't even speak… I couldn't understand what anyone was saying to me and I was alone so the language was a big barrier.'

Hannah had dealt with this problem head on. She had gone out of her way to make friendships with native English speakers, and had fully engaged with University training courses to develop her academic writing skills. During the course of her study, she knew that her language abilities had significantly improved and she had enjoyed the learning experience.

'I can write things now…I still make mistakes but at least I can do it. I have written so much…papers that are peer reviewed…and my thesis!'

In terms of physical health, Hannah had taken the opportunity of learning to swim whilst being in the UK, a pursuit that was not possible in Iraq. Hannah's face lit up when talking about swimming, she had absolutely loved this experience, and it was clear that she felt it had helped not only her physical wellbeing, but also her mental wellbeing. When I asked Hannah how swimming had made her feel, she said that she loved the freedom that it gave her and that she loved to float in the water and feel weightless. It had also helped the pain of her shoulder and upper arm and possibly relieved her stress for the hour that she was in the water.

In summary, Hannah had suffered the loss of both parents and had been beset by grief which had affected her mental wellbeing; her foundations had been removed. She had endured (and

finally won) a custody battle for her daughter, and she had found the experience of being a divorced woman culturally difficult and consequently a lonely existence. These experiences had been exacerbated by her relatively poor English language skills at the start of her study, making her feel inadequate. Yet, with incredible resilience, she had overcome these difficulties, she had persisted, and she had endured. She had made the most of her situation by being a good friend to others – some of them native English-speaking friends, which was reciprocated; she had coped with the regular contact and support of her siblings; and her faith had been central to maintaining her mental wellbeing when she was alone.

'I had a lot of challenges during my study, but day after day we learn, and at the end, look, still alone but strong!'

5.3.4 Hannah's Support Network

When Hannah had originally come to the UK to study for her PhD, she had both parents' backing and was expecting to come with her own daughter from the beginning. This support network was strong and stable, she was an independent, confident woman, and she felt able to complete the study within the usual timelines. However, the death of both her parents, the loss of a year of living without her daughter, a changed supervisor and co-supervisor, and the potentially sensitive nature of her study, had all contributed to her feeling that the foundations of her life had been shaken.

In contrast to other participants with more than one supervisor, Hannah had found all three of her supervisors to be supportive of her throughout the PhD experience, although she had been shocked and 'scared' when her first supervisor and co-supervisor announced they were leaving at the same time. This happened just after Hannah had returned to the UK with her daughter, after her custody battle with her ex-husband, at the start of Hannah's second year. At this point, Hannah was already devastated at the loss of her father, but she had managed to continue

despite her grief. The news that her supervisor and co-supervisor were both leaving caused Hannah to feel considerable stress, as can be seen in the following quote:

'...and my co-supervisor is also going ... what can I do? This killed me. I have no supervisor and no co-supervisor! The supervisor… how they behave is very important. I couldn't do anything. I couldn't speak.'

She was unable to move with her supervisor and co-supervisor to the new university as she had only just secured the visa for her daughter and it would have been too risky to try to change her papers. So Hannah was left with no choice but to find another supervisor. She was introduced to another supervisor that she knew of, and, with her first supervisor's blessing, she started working with the new supervisor, although she acknowledged that this had taken time to adjust to what she described as '*new thinking with new challenges*.'

Fortunately, Hannah's new supervisor was also very supportive although she was sceptical about the sensitive nature of the study and the fact that Hannah would have to go to Iraq to collect her data. She had had to sign a disclaimer to say that she accepted the dangers and her supervisor had said that 'her life was more important than the data', thereby being kind and supportive of Hannah.

As time had passed, her new supervisor had continued to be supportive and Hannah had developed strong friendships with some colleagues and had a wide circle of acquaintances. She knew that she had been fortunate to have the support of her friends, colleagues and supervisor, as she reflected:

'Really… (thank God in Arabic) I could not have done it without them'

By Hannah's fourth year, she had developed herself to the extent that others were going to her for support and this had increased her confidence in her own ability. As a social person, Hannah had been instrumental in organising parties for PGRs, as shown in the following extract:

> *'The social part, especially the parties* (she laughs) *in our research room, we have a lot of parties and people bring food and we talk about everything. The party's not about the party. It was about changing the mood. It is boring sometimes every time same thing. Sitting in front of the PC. It makes the students integrate with each other. Going to another faculty, you see a different way of doing things and so I think the social activities were very important for me. People bring new students and the contacts get bigger.'*

5.3.5 Hannah's Underlying Reasons for Timely Completion

Hannah had a very strong intrinsic motivation to complete the study as she had a point to prove to her ex-husband that she was independent, and to demonstrate to her daughter that persistence always paid off. In terms of her self-identity, she had found the experience of being here as a divorced mother difficult, suffering culture shock, struggling with the intricacies of the language and feeling generally unsure of herself, yet she had overcome these difficulties by fully engaging with University training courses and being socially proactive, thus being a positive role model for her daughter.

Hannah had suffered the loss of both parents during the doctoral journey and she had been beset by grief both times. She had endured (and finally won) a custody battle for her daughter, but this, combined with her grief and also the loss of two supervisors when they moved to other institutions, meant that her mental wellbeing had suffered. However, she had made the most of her situation by being a good friend to others, which was reciprocated; she had coped with the

regular contact and support of her siblings; and her faith had been central to maintaining her mental wellbeing when she was alone.

5.4 Sarah

Sarah was a single person in her thirties and had come to the UK alone. She had taken 48 months to complete her PhD and this had been sponsored by her home country's government (in Iraq) as Sarah was a lecturer there. On her return she would receive a promotion to senior lecturer and this had significant remuneration attached to it. She had been highly motivated to complete her PhD so that she could return home to her parents and siblings. Sarah had struggled as a single female, she found it culturally difficult in her everyday life and this had affected every aspect of her experience.

5.4.1 Sarah's Personal Drive

Sarah was a highly motivated student and her persistence and self-determination had carried her through what she described as a '*very hard time'*. Her motivations (and later difficulties) stemmed from her family allowing her to come to the UK alone and this had led to a sense of duty that she must complete the PhD at all costs, as shown in the extract below:

> *'They trusted me…and they trusted me to come here. As a woman coming alone I didn't want to upset them, and leave the PhD because they trusted me to come here and to complete my PhD so that I could go back as a doctor. I couldn't go back with nothing!'*

Sarah was also extrinsically motivated to comply with her employer's wishes; Sarah was an academic in a highly respected university and was contracted to return with her PhD, or else she would have had to pay all of the money back. Not only that, but her reputation as a highly qualified lecturer was important to her, thus she also had intrinsic motivation. Her obligation

to complete the PhD was therefore very strong, as the alternative of going back to her job without anything was not an option, as shown in the following:

'A big motivation is the shame, you know it would be difficult to go back to your job as a lecturer without your degree, you know you are a lecturer. It is better to give up altogether.'

The language Sarah uses here demonstrates the strength of her self-determination, as the inference was that she would rather die than go back with nothing. However, her drive to complete was in conflict with her need for high standards; she described herself as a perfectionist, but ultimately had had to submit as the pressure was building for her to complete.

'I was a perfectionist …everyone likes to be a perfectionist, for me for example, of course I am looking for something perfect, I am working with this project for so long…but eventually accepting the truth…that nothing is perfect, it is acceptable in the research field. And by the end, with the difficulties that surround you, it is better to accept that it is better to just submit…just submit it.'

5.4.2 Sarah's Self-Identity

Sarah had also found the experience of being a non-native English-speaking student a difficult one on many different levels, as she tried to cope with the radical change to her self-identity. Back at work in her home country, she had her own office and was respected as an academic. She had her family to support her at home and she felt secure. Yet when she arrived in Salford as a lone PhD student, she found herself to be in a very different situation. For example, in the university she did not receive the space or equipment that she was expecting.

'I don't work in the office with the other students we had a lot of problems in the office, it is a big office with a lot of people so you can't ask them to stop talking,

so it is difficult to work with this noise. Also in my first year I was shocked you know my pc was so old, I was expecting to have a new pc, so my first year was wasted. I was working on my own laptop but it discourages you.'

Sarah had found the complete change of life (when she arrived in the UK) to be very difficult, and had experienced culture shock, similar to the findings in Zhou et al., (2008). Back in her home country, she had parents and siblings to look after her and to sort out domestic issues. She had never lived apart from her parents, never paid a bill, or had to look after herself, and so it was extremely difficult when she first arrived.

'I didn't have any idea how to live with paying the bills… buying the food. This takes your time, I hadn't done that before.'

She talked about the first few days of being in Salford as being 'black days' where she felt lost and when the culture shock was at its fiercest, as can be seen in this extract:

'The first day I arrived I had booked accommodation in Manchester it was 5pm or 6pm on Friday they told me you can't come at this time to start your accommodation it is the weekend, you can't. They can't take the payment so you can't start your accommodation. I felt lost in this new country …so I had to find a place to live in so I spoke with some people and they told me to speak to this person and she said to come over to her place. It was difficult… I was alone. I spent the first night with her. Then I went to live in student accommodation with 6 undergraduate students but it was so difficult because it was the first time I had lived with someone else …only my family before…from different religions. So I started to look for a flat to live in, but it was so expensive, so I had to find someone to share with.'

Throughout the whole experience, Sarah had found being alone the most difficult aspect to bear. She was in a culture different from her own, and the collective impact of feeling loneliness and feeling lost was overwhelming, resulting in culture shock, as Zhou et al., (2008) also found. Even at the end, when Sarah was writing up her thesis, being alone troubled her daily thoughts.

'I had some days that were really long and sometimes I thought about just staying in the library until the morning because I didn't want to go home alone. I knew that the way that they look at women who spend the night outside is bad so I had to keep my respect but it was difficult to keep this good picture about you.'

Sarah's English language ability had also been a source of concern to her. When she had arrived, she barely understood what was being said to her and this contributed to her isolation. She recognised this as a problem and spent time during her first year to concentrate on improving her language skills.

'It was very difficult time when I first arrived because even though I had the IELTS score I needed, I wasn't fluent and so I couldn't understand what was happening… the accent of people… so instead of working on my research I concentrated on my language.'

In summary, Sarah's self-identity had changed dramatically: prior to her arrival in the UK as a doctoral candidate, she was a well-respected academic supporting her financial and power status, she was comfortable, happy and knowledgeable in her culture, and was thriving in her career. On arrival into the UK, Sarah had suffered culture shock especially in the first few weeks, and this had damaged her self-confidence. Secondly, she had found it difficult adjusting to life as a student, without any of her work colleagues around to support her, and thirdly, she had found it difficult having to do things for herself as a single person, without her family around her.

5.4.3 Sarah's Wellbeing

Sarah had suffered with depression as a direct result of her experience as a non-native English-speaking PhD candidate. She had been supported by her friends, and by the wellbeing service of the university (she had attended counselling), but not colleagues in her study room, as there had been a very competitive spirit between the supervisor's students. This possibility, of students fostering unnecessary competition between themselves and demonstrating passive-aggressive behaviours, is presented by Jairam & Kahl (2012) as a common occurrence. These behaviours had led to feelings of not being good enough, and not being as good as the other students, causing Sarah to feel very isolated and alone. When Sarah was reflecting on her time at Salford, she became quite upset and began to cry. She had found the experience to be very difficult for many reasons, and some of these things had caused her to feel very low indeed, as shown in the following extract, where Sarah was crying throughout:

> *'When I was down, my friends helped me… there were people…because er…..er…the main difficultly is to stay alone in a different country, different traditions… different culture, different language, you know…everything takes more time. I got advice from a lecturer to get help from my doctor to deal with this, you know…this depression. Because it is a lot of pressure, pressure of study, pressure of homesickness, these things caused a depression, but by the end my friends were there. I got prescriptions to heal from my depression… it was difficult as well to get this kind of treatment you know… because of traditions and culture but I had to be open minded and try this you know. But it is not accepted in my country so it was better to keep silent than to announce it to everybody.'*

As can be seen in the above extract, Sarah had struggled with her mental health not least because of the taboo of depression in her culture. It was not acceptable to be seen to be weak

or vulnerable, and so she had had to keep silent about this part of her life. She saw no way out of the situation, as demonstrated in the following quote:

'I reached a situation that it was better to die than to leave the PhD.'

Sarah's faith had been an important survival tool for her, she believed that God would protect her and keep her safe from harm. She described how important it was to have a good relationship with God, especially since she was here without her family. Whilst happy that she had some good friends who were extremely supportive of her, she was also accepting that friends could not be around all of the time.

'My religion says if you have faith that there is a very big power that can protect you…Ok there are friends but they are not with you all the time but if you have faith it helps you to cope.'

Sarah also talked about her mental health deteriorating as a result of her difficult financial status, as this had caused her to feel frightened that she may not be able to cope.

'…it was one of the reasons that I got this depression case, we have some political issues and they are paying my salary so whenever there was a critical case they stop the salary… and you know it is very expensive to live here, the research, the rent, it is impossible to pay for everything without a salary. I had a period of time when I started to receive news that they are not going to pay and it stopped me from my study for about 2 months … because every day I called my sponsor, emailed them, begged them to pay me just so that I was safe here without others to ask.'

Sarah also talked about her strained relationship with her supervisor as affecting her mental health. The relationship had been difficult for Sarah to come to terms with, and she was constantly thinking that she was not good enough for him.

'My supervisor constantly put me down and it affected my self-esteem you know…he made me feel bad, especially at the end you know. But then after I did my viva he was ok…he was pleased… but I needed this encouragement during my study not afterwards! Not to give orders, but to be kind with me when I needed it.'

5.4.4 Sarah's Support Network

Sarah had felt supported from her family back in her home country, but this had also caused her to feel pressure because the expectation was so great, and she had suffered terribly with homesickness.

'I had support from my family, but I've missed them…sorry… you have 2 options… they can't come here and I can't go there, for example I've been home once a year, so four times. I was not planning to go home in my fourth year but my mother had health issues and I needed to go home to see her.'

Her siblings had been compelled to 'cover' her absence in the family home, where she had done her share of the domestic duties and brought in her salary each month. This had left a hole in her family's life and Sarah was well aware of this sacrifice.

'My family trusted me, they guaranteed our home. It was a big challenge for my family, our society is sometimes difficult… how do you allow a woman to live alone? If you are not married you have to live with your family because of religious reasons and social traditions. You have to help in your family. So they

allowed me to study here alone… it was a big sacrifice for all of them. My father is open-minded he wanted his daughter to be a doctor. So I couldn't leave.'

Sarah had had the same supervisor throughout the journey although the relationship had not been a positive one. She had found him to be distant and unsupportive, and when she needed a boost to her confidence, he had not been there for her. Sarah felt that he was not 'on her side' and this had been a source of even more isolation. This is in line with the findings of Jairam & Kahl (2012), who describe inappropriate supervisor behaviour such as belittling ideas as being potentially damaging to the candidate in increasing feelings of isolation, as demonstrated in the following excerpt:

'… he was so restrictive with me… he was so strict…I didn't get the help I needed from him. Maybe he looked at this as motivating but he was tough with me… it is his mood, his lifestyle, the way he deals with people… sometimes you need kindness not bad words you know…it is lonely sometimes… you need someone to say it's ok but I'm looking forward to seeing something better, you know… to encourage you.'

Sarah's friends had been a great source of support to her, she had found a flatmate that had become a good friend, and had met others through her, and this had helped Sarah to cope in the '*dark days'*. Sarah's tenacity and perseverance had finally paid off, and on completion she acknowledged that her character had become stronger for the experience.

'To know how strong you are… to know it was not the end.'

5.5.5 Sarah's Underlying Reasons for Timely Completion

Sarah was a highly motivated person, both intrinsically and extrinsically. Her extrinsic motivation to complete the doctorate was so that her career and reputation as an academic

would benefit, but the intrinsic motivation was very deep rooted in that Sarah had been trusted by her family to come alone to the UK and she carried the burden that she must complete at all costs.

Sarah had suffered terrible acculturation distress especially in the first few days (‘*dark days’*) but such was the strength of her self-determination, she persisted through. Her self-identity had changed dramatically; prior to her arrival in the UK, she was a well-respected academic with financial and power status, she was comfortable, happy and knowledgeable in her culture, living with her family in the family home and was thriving in her career. In the UK, she was alone as a single person; the collective impact of feeling loneliness and feeling lost was overwhelming.

Sarah had also experienced a poor relationship with her supervisor, he had damaged her self-confidence, self-efficacy and ultimately, her self-esteem. Her depression (as a culmination of all of these problems) was severe, yet she could not admit this to anybody as she thought it would make her appear weak and vulnerable. Yet, despite all of these severe barriers to her completion, Sarah was able to complete the doctorate in 48 months, due to her overriding levels of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, her strong faith, the support of her siblings and her good friends.

5.5 Beth

Beth was in the age category 30-49, and was a married mother of three children, aged 16, 15 and 11. Her husband and children had all come to the UK together from Libya so that Beth could study for her PhD, as she was a lecturer and was sponsored by the Embassy to live and study in the UK. Her employer had convinced her to do the PhD as it would guarantee a promotion on her return, and Beth had seen it as an opportunity for her whole family, since the ‘Arab Spring’ had meant there was a lot of political unrest and security risks. She had taken 48

months to complete her PhD and had just graduated at the time of the interview. She was very proud of her achievement given the difficult circumstances that she had coped with at home. As a proud Muslim man, Beth's husband had struggled to cope with his new life in the UK and Beth thought that he felt threatened by her qualification. Beth had still been expected to run the household, including cooking, cleaning and taking care of the children, despite her study being full-time and her husband not working. This had caused great strain on Beth and she felt that her health had suffered as a consequence of these circumstances.

5.5.1 Beth's Personal Drive

Beth had originally come to the UK to complete her doctoral study because it would mean a promotion to Senior Lecturer on her return and her career path would then be set. However, on hermeneutic interpretation and sense making, it appeared that underneath this phenomenological claim, in fact Beth had seen this as a good opportunity for herself and her family to escape from war and terrorism in her home country, and this was the real driver for her to come to the UK. Through her narrative account, it became clear that she had not particularly been motivated to complete a PhD for career purposes, although her employer had strongly encouraged her to do it. Rather, she feared for the safety of her husband and children, especially her 15 year-old son, whom she believed would end up being caught up in the war if she did not get him out of the country.

> '*Sometimes it depends on the personality itself actually, thinking for the family and for the kids first. For me, I really wanted my kids to come here and to study here, especially my son – he's in year 10 now and has had a good life in secondary school. He's just one year left to get his GCSEs so I'm really trying to get a job so we can stay one year more in the UK. It will not be good if he goes back, so this makes me worry a lot and it has affected my personality.'*

Beth had completed her MSc degree in the UK and had gone back to her job as a lecturer in Libya, but shortly after her return, there had been the revolution of 2011 and Beth claimed that she had felt that she must complete a PhD because other academic staff were getting opportunities in other countries to study, but she also talked about it being the right time for her children to move away.

> *'If you can catch an opportunity to go further you get an increase in salary and they tried to convince me that it was really good and that I should do it. So in that situation at that time it seemed like a good idea. So the unsettled situation at that time and I suppose I was thinking the kids will have more years in the UK and they will improve themselves, it will be good for them to finish their studies here.'*

For Beth, therefore, the main motivating factor was not the academic requirement for herself ('compliance' as per Deci et al, 1991), although this played a part in her decision making, but it was more about the opportunity that this chance offered to her family, including herself, of living in the UK. During the doctoral journey, however, due to other issues to be discussed in the following sections, Beth struggled to keep going and her persistence was only such that she wanted her family to stay in the UK. She was a dedicated, conscientious student and her commitment to continue ensured that she persisted even though she really struggled to juggle all of her roles simultaneously. When reflecting on the financial struggle that she had endured, she felt that her husband had let her down because he had been unable to earn money in the UK and this had impacted on their lifestyle, as shown in the following quote:

> *'I faced very critical issues. You can't concentrate on anything properly if you are worried about the rent and the bills.'*

5.5.2 Beth's Self-Identity

Beth's self-identity had developed during the PhD, as she reflected on her journey, Beth became quite emotional at her growth into a more confident person. She had benefitted from seeing how other Arabic women coped with their life and whereas she previously had not thought she had choices, now she realised that she was the driving force in her family; not only the breadwinner but also the central core of her family. She had seen her friends' husbands be more supportive in the home and earning an income in the UK, and she realised that she did have choices and her life was not as set as she had previously thought. An extract shows how difficult it was for Beth:

> *'My husband is another issue actually, because the personality of the husband in my culture is to play a very important role, the wife where she's studying it's difficult. One of the critical issues was that my husband doesn't work here and he has a strong Arabic personality where he's… (trails off) due to me… I have to give him everything… It's okay if the wife is just a housewife, it's fine, but within the studying it's really hard because he's used to dealing with his own environment. I did this for a while in Libya and when we came here he tried to continue with the same way, the same routine, but it's really hard. He has not changed, but we have!'*

Beth's self-identity as a mother and wife had been compromised; whilst her children had normalised their situation at home, where dad was 'supposed' to be the enforcer of rules, sometimes physically, Beth had found the time at home to be a difficult environment because her husband was there most of the time, yet not helping in any way. The following extract shows how much this had affected Beth, where she began to weep at her experience.

'It's a big responsibility because I do it, everything circles around me. The kids say that I'm the mum and the dad. They feel that. They don't have the same respect for him. It's not hard for him because I feel like he's much more relaxed than me. They all wait for me, they wait for me to finish. So it's hard to have a husband but he can't do his role as it should. I don't feel that he does the half. He wastes energy. For example, when the kids get negative energy from their dad they come to me so any conflict with him and they wait for me… I feel very tired. They just come to me and I tried to be patient. I am old, I can deal with these problems but they are in a critical ages. The rules and regulations are different for us. I try to discuss with them … I talked a lot a lot a lot with them! Try to explain I feel very tired they just give me their negative feelings, they are at a critical age. I am old and I can deal with this but they can't its different for them they think about people and they try to observe other people but it's hard for them with my husband – it's about his childhood, personality, it reflects on their life. I'm trying to make them settle down, they are my, you know, my target.'

The children clearly did not have a good relationship with their dad, and this had affected Beth's self-identity as a mother and a wife. She had been acting as an intermediary rather than a mother and wife, as can be seen in the following:

'…they don't like to deal with him, they don't rely on their dad, they just rely on me when they need something, when they want to buy something so this is really hard. Family responsibility is a big issue because it's how to deal with your husband, it's hard to think about anything else!'

Despite this, Beth reflected on her experience at home with her family in a positive way, she saw it as a time of growth for herself and her children, particularly in relation to how she had grown in confidence and her ways of thinking, for example:

'I think my personality has changed, the way I think, my awareness has increased. Also for us, there are advantages for us, if we divide the advantages and disadvantages, we can see, and when I talk about my journey the advantages come first, when I am just alone and just go step by step through the journey, the advantages are there not only for me but all the family, we have all got better skills and capabilities, self-confidence, relationships, networking, problem solving, dealing with other cultures, so I think oh there are really a lot of advantages of this PhD. It's worth a lot… I feel satisfied.'

In summary, Beth's self-identity had initially changed from being a confident and well respected academic combined with being a mother and wife, to being a doctoral candidate with little respect shown for this work at home. Her faith as a Muslim had helped in some ways, yet this had also caused tension as the cultural expectations were great. She had struggled to cope with her husband's inability to find work and carry out the 'normal cultural expectations' of a husband and father, and this had caused her own self-identity to be compromised as she tried to simultaneously fulfil all the roles of student, income provider (in terms of the sponsorship), mother and father, and wife.

5.5.3 Beth's Wellbeing

Beth had found the balance between her cultural expectations (and those of her husband and children) and the PhD study to be physically and mentally taxing on her health. For example, Beth talked about her need to get up very early, before the family, so that she could prepare everything and similarly she would go to bed late at night because she wanted to study. The

lack of sleep had affected her physical health; the following excerpt from her transcript shows this.

'It's hard sometimes getting the balance. Sometimes I think what's the benefit exactly from the PhD but when you think about it, it's okay, but it affects your health, and the health is the most important thing. Sometimes you can't answer yourself! But when you are not in good health… it's more important about your health. It will give me more money, I would have a promotion, but it's not enough.'

It had been particularly difficult during Ramadan, because she had had even less sleep due to the requirement of her to prepare the food for the breaking of the fast at dusk, combined with the physical lethargy felt because of fasting during the day.

'It affected me. I feel tired. In terms of mental, well sometimes dealing with the kids when they do something wrong, I get angry, it can be a small thing, and they say calm down mum, and I think yeah it's just a small thing, why am I getting so …well it… affect your reactions, affecting you… you feel like …oh you don't have the energy. This is an issue.'

Beth's mental wellbeing had also suffered due to the stress of her wider family being back in Libya and thus, potentially in danger. She talked of the difficulty in maintaining concentration when she knew there were problems back in her home city. Also, she did not want to return with her husband and three teenage children to a warzone, where they could have been drawn into the trouble. For example, she said:

'I feel like deep inside all the time worry and stress because of the uncertain situation in my home country, because if Libya was fine I would go straight back,

then the situation became much worse and I was thinking how could I try to stay longer in England and this is making me worry, how to manage both financially and get the visa - those two issues are very hard to manage. So all the time I'm thinking. I can't enjoy my time, I'm just spending my time just looking for a job, looking for opportunities … sometimes it's hard.'

Despite the worry, even at the time of the interview, Beth felt an overwhelming sense of pride at her achievement and together with her determination to remain in the UK, she was confident that she would find a job and be able to stay, thus protecting her family. This had a positive effect on her mental wellbeing, as she felt that she was doing well for her family and culturally this was important to her.

5.5.4 Beth's Support Network

Beth had a support network of her friends and colleagues at university; her life outside of university was limited to doing household chores and caring for her family. She was also supported by her employer in Libya, they had encouraged her to come to the UK to study for her PhD and they had paid her fees and salary, although this had not been without difficulty, for example:

'The first and second year, the salary was fine but after that I faced issues with finance, it's one of the big things, critical issues, in the first and second year it was regularly every month but after that (trails off…) it made me worry I was thinking if I can't finish my PhD, what will I do? It made me worry. It was one of the challenges that I faced. I did not want to go back to Libya with this situation.'

This shows the lack of financial support she felt (culturally) that her husband should be providing for the family. The responsibility of her (alone) bringing in the salary meant increased pressure and they had struggled financially on a day to day basis. Her children had

settled well and adapted to life in the UK, going to both English and Arabic schools, and Beth felt that they had really benefitted from being in the UK.

'Well…they didn't face any problems, any issues, although they are all at different stages, because one in primary school, one in high school and one in college. They are fine, there's no issues at all which is very very good because sometimes there can be problems in the school with maybe their friends because of the different culture and nationalities, but for me it was important that they had a good education.'

Beth was very proud of her children's ability to cope with their father and general family dynamic at home, and with their studies in both English and Arabic.

'They go to English school in the week and Libyan school at weekends so they keep their Arabic. They have all done that all the time. Their English is perfect and they work very hard compared to others at their school. They can do everything in both English and Arabic. I had to do that because I didn't know if I would go back to Libya. If you want to go the next stage you have to pass the first stage, its different from here, when it's about age. For example, if your kids go to Libya they have to start from the beginning, whatever their age…It's hard here the system, the language, the subjects, but they have done really well. They get tired, but they have done it all the time.'

Beth felt she had been lucky to have a supportive supervisor throughout her study. This had helped her to overcome the feelings of low self-worth caused by her husband. The supervisor relationship, combined with her friends and colleagues, had been Beth's support network. Consequently, Beth spoke of her supervisor in high regard.

'This is a really important point for me because he just helped me to carry on. It's a really long journey, so if I don't feel comfortable, I need someone who keep me motivated, someone who is involved in my work. So at the beginning, my supervisor helped me a lot. He pushed me to go to workshops and to conferences, to English classes. He made me feel happy. I am a committed personality, if I have any task I feel I have to finish. The way that I work as a person, if anyone asks me for anything I have to do it, so he pushed me to keep going.'

In university, Beth had benefitted from networking and making friends, garnering great support and helping her to get through the problems at home. This scholarly community had provided Beth with the support network that she lacked at home with her family and was a key factor in her doctoral journey; this is in support of the findings in Leichty et al., (2009), who claimed that social support from peers is a critical success factor in completion of doctoral study. An extract from Beth's transcript reads:

'When I started and just immediately I got a desk in my study room and the group there was friendly and I make relationships from the beginning and I feel comfortable straight away. And I was not working from home I was coming every day to the office I engaged with the events and I felt familiar with the school. It's really important to see the other academics, the staff, with everyone, it's like it's important to feel part of the place of study or work, not like a stranger.'

5.5.5 Beth's Underlying Reasons for Timely Completion

Beth was intrinsically motivated to come to the UK for the sake of her family and this had an impact on her study as she knew she must remain on track so that her family could stay in the UK.

Beth's self-identity had initially changed from being a confident and well respected academic combined with being a mother and wife, to being a doctoral candidate with little respect shown from her husband at home. She had struggled to cope with her multiple, competing roles; as student, income provider, mother *and* father to her children, and wife. Her mental and physical health had suffered as a consequence of trying to be everything to her children, her husband and her supervisor. However, on reflection of the study journey, she felt triumphant that she had managed to carry this off. Her children had benefitted from being in the UK, and Beth's self-confidence had grown dramatically. By the end of the study period, Beth's confidence had returned; her self-efficacy had been boosted by her ability to survive the difficulties that she had endured and successfully complete the PhD in 48 months.

5.6 Ruth

Ruth was a single female from Iraq, in the age category 30-49, and had taken 48 months to complete her PhD, although the first year had been spent at another university in the UK, and prior to this she had completed a pre-sessional English language course at the same university. Ruth had completed both her bachelor and master degrees in Iraq, and had never travelled out of the country before coming to the UK for her pre-sessional English course and doctoral study. Ruth was employed as a lecturer back in her home city university, and they sponsored her fees and living expenses to complete her doctorate in the UK. Ruth had worked extremely hard to get her PhD timeline back on track after the first year had proven 'useless' in that she had discarded all of the work and her topic had changed completely. When she had transferred to Salford, she had found a very supportive supervisor and this, as Ruth expressed, had 'saved' her; his guidance and encouragement had been a major factor in Ruth's timely completion.

5.6.1 Ruth's Personal Drive

Ruth was intrinsically motivated by the prospect of returning to her home country with a PhD which would enhance her skills and knowledge in her field of study, so that she would be able to teach her students and use her research skills to gain some kudos in the academic context. Ruth had also been intrinsically motivated by family honour – she was financially supporting her parents and they had placed great trust in her to come to the UK alone and complete the study.

> *'I wanted to return to my family as soon as I could to make them proud because they always said to me you have to work hard because we love your work you have to be a doctor to help the family.*'

Sadly, for Ruth, her mother passed away towards the end of her doctorate and she was unable to return in time to see her. She was devastated by her mother's death because she had promised her that she would get the PhD and return to her. This had been a motivating factor for her during the study, she wanted to gain her mother's approval and praise. During the interview, Ruth became upset at this reflection and started to cry. She said, through her tears:

> '*I promised my mum I would complete so I had to complete. I have kept my promise.'*

Consequently, the motivation to get the timeline back on track and to please her family meant that Ruth had worked long hours every day, and in some ways this helped with her grief because her supervisor was so positive with her for working so hard and she found it rewarding when her supervisor gave her feedback, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

> *'I work all day from 6 in the morning until 11 at night continuously, but I have enjoyed doing that because my supervisor encouraged me a lot always with*

words and with emails, saying to me that I am a good student and I am working hard and this just made me work even harder to get these lovely words from him.'

Ruth had spent the first year of her doctorate at another institution, but she had been completely 'amotivated' as Deci & Ryan, (2010) described it, by poor supervision. Since arriving in Salford, Ruth reflected that she had worked tirelessly to try to retrieve the 'lost time'. However, as can be seen in the following sections, this need to work so hard, the phenomenological claim, was actually to mask her underlying grief and sadness.

5.6.2 Ruth's Self-Identity

Ruth's self-identity was primarily as a well-respected academic. Her status that her work gave her justified her existence, she had not married and had a family of her own, and so therefore her role was that of a hard-working employee. With her family, as an unmarried daughter, her role in her parents' family home had been to earn money and carry out what she described as 'normal duties' in the home, duties which she took very seriously. She had made the personal sacrifice to leave them behind (in agreement with the findings of Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012), so that she could enhance her reputation as an academic researcher, which she considered to be the primary role in her life. Her sister had taken over the 'normal duties' in the family home, and Ruth felt indebted to her for doing this.

Ruth's self-identity as a doctoral candidate was therefore a comfortable one, she was happy to be in an academic culture within the university that enhanced her research skills and was an extremely conscientious student. She had suffered acculturation distress when she arrived at the first institution, in terms of being in a foreign country alone as a single woman, but when she arrived in Salford she was determined to simply work hard and sacrifice any social life to catch up her lost time. Like Stephen, her lived experience of being a doctoral candidate meant that she was either studying, sleeping or praying.

Ruth felt that her problems with the first institution (where she spent 12 months) had caused damage to her reputation – with her peers and with her colleagues back in Iraq. Her self-identity as a well-respected academic was under threat. For example:

'The problems affected my reputation as a student and as a lecturer with my sponsor, many people say that I am a good researcher and with good knowledge, so I had to complete it. The problem was not my ability to study, the problem was something else – my relationship with my first supervisor, bad circumstances, lots of things happened…so to prove to them that I am a good researcher I am a good student, I just worked hard to complete it.'

In summary, Ruth's self-identity was as a hard-working, well-respected academic and researcher, and this status gave her existence legitimacy. She had lived out this identity through her study behaviours, in working long hours in the research room and in making up the lost time of the first year of study; and so, therefore, her doctoral journey had simply consolidated her self-identity as a well-respected academic.

5.6.3 Ruth's Wellbeing

Ruth's mental wellbeing had suffered throughout the doctoral journey, for several reasons, which will now be discussed.

Firstly, as Ruth reflected on the poor supervision that she had received during her first year in another institution, she became quite defiant with regard to his treatment of her. Now that she could reflect on her lived experience safely (with the doctorate completed and the relationship in the past) she was wholly dissatisfied, but phenomenologically claimed that this had ultimately helped her in the long run. Because Ruth identified as a 'good academic researcher' that enjoyed the experience of studying, this poor experience had affected her self-efficacy, as she began to worry that it was her own fault that the relationship was not working as it should. A quote from her transcript show this:

'My first supervisor always criticised my work and made me feel upset after every meeting, I thought I couldn't do it…this didn't help me in moving forward, it affected my ability to enjoy my study and to continue.'

Ruth's hermeneutic sense-making during the act of reflecting led her to understand that it was also the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the relationship was effective; that it was a two-way process. This led to her feeling dissatisfied, but she had put her faith in God and she believed that the good that came from this experience was that she found a very supportive second supervisor when she moved to Salford. Her experience had caused her to feel defiance, that indeed she was going to work extra hard to prove the first supervisor wrong.

Another aspect that negatively affected Ruth's mental wellbeing was her loneliness. Ruth phenomenologically claimed that she was here in the UK alone, but hermeneutically did not recognise her own loneliness; she masked this from herself by keeping busy with her study and being at the university for long hours each day. In some ways, her personal resilience was such that she had learnt to deal with this, although she was not necessarily aware that she had found this inner strength. However, she had no social life beyond her colleagues in the research office, and did not want to be 'distracted' from her study.

'Because I live alone… sometimes you need family around you, so it is better to keep busy and not be distracted. I tell my friends I can't take a rest because I have so much work to do'.

Another aspect of Ruth's psychological state was that she had not married and had children and it was now too late for her. This situation caused her great sadness, she claimed phenomenologically, and she recognised this sadness and had learnt to mask this (hermeneutically). This feeling of sadness also manifested itself through her need to keep busy, because whilst she was busy being a 'good researcher' she was not thinking about herself as single. Ruth explained that she didn't talk about this with anybody, as a faithful Muslim, she

believed that this was God's choice for her and that she must accept it. This deep-rooted sadness is shown in the following:

'You reach this age without anything… you feel you are not so happy and this affects me a lot… it makes me feel sad, so when I think about it …it makes me cry, so I try to keep busy, even if I don't have something specific to do, I still work. I don't have time to think about anything else, I am alone, sometimes I think in not a positive way to try and forget about my life so I keep busy.'

The final aspect that affected Ruth's mental wellbeing was her grief at the loss of her mother, at the end of the doctoral journey; Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw (2012) referred to these experiences as needing to be endured and one of the hurdles to overcome in persisting in the doctoral study. The loss of Ruth's mother had been taken particularly hard for two reasons: firstly, her personal drive had been rooted in her strong desire to go back to her mother as a 'Doctor'. Secondly, her single status meant that her mother had been the closest person to her and was likely to be the only person in her life that she felt this close to. The following excerpt shows this:

'*I can't you know… when I just work hard to achieve my PhD and go back home to see my mum to say to her I complete because…but now I return back to home I will find her place is empty so it's difficult for me, I don't want to go to Iraq you know I need to go but I don't want to go. I feel from my heart that my family has changed the home sometimes I feel that they have to change the home because my mum is not there. Sorry Maggie I feel this always, and particularly when I completed my PhD.'*

In summary, Ruth's self-esteem had been damaged by the first supervisor as she felt that she had somehow not worked effectively. This had caused her to then work extra hard during the final three years to make up for the lost time; however, this pattern of behaviour was also in

existence in order to mask her underlying feelings of sadness at her loneliness as a result of her single status.

5.6.4 Ruth's Support Network

Ruth was in the UK alone with no family around her and this had affected every aspect of Ruth's life. Her working day was from early in the morning until late at night, only returning to her flat to sleep; partly because when she was in the university, she was with people. Loneliness has been highlighted as a problem in doctoral study by several authors (Delamont, in Lee et al., 2013; Denicolo et al., 2018; Elliot et al., 2017) and Ruth had learned to cope with this in three ways: firstly, by being in the university all day with colleagues; secondly by leaning on her faith (she said *'God is always with me'*) and, thirdly, by speaking regularly to her family in Iraq. An excerpt from the transcript shows her justifying (to herself) why she stays late.

'I have a good office and a good computer and a good environment for study, I can chat when I want a break, sometimes it's noisy…there are about 25 desks in there, but many of them they study at home, and after 3 o clock it is quiet, so I just keep going until 11 o clock and return to my flat.'

In agreement with several authors, such as Lee (2012), Taylor (2012, Elliot et al., (2016), Park (2005), Delamont et al., (2000), Ruth's positive relationship with her supervisor (at Salford) had been a key factor in her progression and completion. She had previously spent one year at another institution, with such poor supervision that it had been the reason that she had left, in line with the study by Tan & Meijer (2001) who attributed poor supervision to high attrition. Ruth acknowledged the importance of the supervisor relationship in the following quote:

'My relationship with my supervisor has been very important for me, even when I felt tired he would say to me, it's okay you can take a rest and it is fine with me, he is so kind, he is such a

kind man, it has made me complete my work. A good supervisor can change everything. I had many meetings with him and he was always available by email, even at the weekend, so he would say do this do that and that was fine. He even moved to another country, but I still felt he was available, we still talked by Skype. He makes me feel positive, thank God.'

In summary, Ruth had struggled with loneliness throughout the doctoral journey, but she had learned to cope with this by working long hours in the research office (being around other doctoral candidates), by her faith in God ('*God is always with me'*), and by speaking to her family back in Iraq. Her supervisor at Salford had also been a great support to her and she held him in very high regard.

5.6.5 Ruth's Underlying Reasons for Timely Completion

The main reason that Ruth had completed her doctorate in a timely fashion was because despite having spent the first year of her doctorate at another institution, with poor supervision, she had moved to Salford with a renewed motivation and vigour to catch up. Since then, she had worked tirelessly to try to retrieve the '*lost time'* although this pattern of behaviour was in fact to mask deeper problems of grief – at the loss of possibility of being a wife and mother, and then the death of her own mother.

Ruth's self-identity was as a hard-working, well-respected academic and researcher, and this status gave her existence legitimacy. She had lived out this identity through her study behaviours, in working long hours in the research room and in making up the lost time of the first year of study; and so, therefore, the final part of her doctoral journey had simply consolidated her self-identity as a well-respected academic.

However, Ruth's self-esteem had been damaged by the first supervisor as Ruth herself felt responsible for the breakdown in the relationship, but in the end this had worked positively for Ruth, because she had become defiant in wanting to prove her own self-worth.

5.7 Chapter Summary

The primary data from Study Group 1 have been presented, analysed and discussed in this chapter. This part of the study consisted of five in-depth, semi-structured, narrative style interviews, conducted with participants that had completed their doctorate in a timely manner, and which were analysed using an IPA strategy. IPA revealed four superordinate themes as being: the personal drive to complete the doctoral study; self-identity as a doctoral candidate; physical and mental wellbeing; and the support network around the candidate. The findings and analysis from each participant were therefore structured around these four superordinate themes, which represented their phenomenological claims and hermeneutic sense making. It can be seen that, for the most part, the four superordinate themes were all manifested differently for each individual, since each person is made up of complex life experiences which all interrelate to form the set of ontological beliefs that the person holds about their doctoral experience. However, there were also commonalities, and these will be further discussed in Chapter 7. The next chapter will present and analyse the findings from Study Group 2: those participants that had not completed in a timely fashion.

Chapter 6: Findings and Analysis of Study Group 2 (Late Completers)

6.1 Chapter Introduction

The previous chapter presented and analysed the findings from SG1 through IPA. This chapter presents the findings and analysis of Study Group 2 (SG2), which consists of five participants that had taken longer than 52 months to complete their doctorate, and were considered to be late completers. In-depth, semi-structured, narrative style interviews are analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) techniques.

The first part of this chapter will introduce the five participants of the main study that were considered to be late completers. They were a purposively selected homogenous sample, in that they had all completed their full-time PhD study in the previous 12 months; they were all non-native English speakers; they had all travelled to the UK for the primary purpose of study (not previously been living in the UK); and they had all taken longer to complete their doctorate. The participants were interviewed using a semi-structured approach, with the opportunity to discuss their lived experience in a narrative style way.

6.2 Tim

Tim was 35 years old, living in a rented terraced house with his wife and two young primary school aged children. Both Tim and his wife were academics in the same university and his wife was also in Manchester completing her doctorate. The children were both in a local primary school, having had all of their education in Salford. Tim and his wife were on a double scholarship for a four-year period, and on completion of their doctorates they were contracted to return to Indonesia and work for the same employer for 8 years, otherwise they would have to pay the scholarship back. Tim had already worked for his university for 8 years prior to coming to Salford and since he wanted promotion to Senior Lecturer, he had been required to complete a PhD. Tim had completed his PhD including the viva and was working on the minor

corrections, and his wife had already submitted the hard-bound copies, making their experience of studying the doctorate a five-year period. They had had to ask for an extension from their employer, which had taken time and effort, but this had been granted and they were planning to return home and go back to work immediately.

6.2.1 Tim's Personal Drive

Tim was originally motivated to study for a PhD in the UK because he saw the opportunity as one that he could take for not only himself, but also for his wife, who also came to the UK to complete her PhD, and for their children. Tim had worked for the same university for 8 years as a lecturer, and during that time he had married and had children. Both Tim and his wife had decided that it would be a great opportunity to come to the UK for the whole family. They saw this opportunity as a whole family benefit, with the children having a British primary school education. Tim phenomenologically claimed that they needed to complete the doctorate for career reasons, as an act of compliance in extrinsic motivation, as per Deci et al, (1991) and both Tim and his wife were going to be promoted to Senior Lecturer on their return. However, on interpretation of this point, it became clear that the extrinsic motivation of their compliance with promotion procedures, was in fact secondary to the real drivers for the family to come to the UK. The much deeper (and hidden) reason was that Tim and his wife wanted their children to have a British education for their early years, to develop their language fluency.

In terms of the subject of his PhD, Tim was also intrinsically motivated to study because his home city/country had suffered terribly from a natural disaster, where he had lost close relatives. This had caused trauma and devastation and had affected every aspect of Tim's life. He was absolutely determined to do well for himself in life and so his motivation to remain on track had remained quite high during his study, although he had had periods of procrastination. His wife had helped him to keep going, in fact they had worked together so that both completed

at the same time, and they had buoyed each other along when one was feeling demotivated, as shown in the following excerpt:

> '*I have a bad habit. Sometimes I put all the things off till the last minute … but my wife doesn't do that! I found that she always does her work, she can manage her time so she didn't wait till the last minute, like me. She has shown me a better way to work and it helped me to see her working every day. It forced me to start work again when I had a…blank time. I got lost in the middle just reading, reading, without writing anything. That's what happened.'*

He was, at the time of interview, quite sad that the doctoral journey had ended and that he and his wife had to return to '*real work'* and the children had to return to *'hard school'* back in their home country. The children did not want to leave and had thoroughly enjoyed their time in the UK, as shown in the following quote:

> *'We have to all go back now, back to real work and back to hard school for the kids, it will definitely be hard for us, but it is the next step.'*

6.2.2 Tim's Self-Identity

Tim could not be described as well off, but he (and his wife) did have the double scholarship every month, although the money had not gone as far as it would have at home, where the standard of living was cheaper. Therefore, his financial and power status were not significantly altered, he was with his family living in a house and their study was treated as a job. He was providing a safe and secure environment for his family and this was important for Tim, given his family history. In short, the financial impact on Tim's progression had been minimal, and thus, whilst his self-identity had altered to that of being a student rather than a lecturer, the impact on him was negligible.

However, the administration process had been difficult for Tim from a language point of view; he did not always know what was expected of him and was not always able to express exactly the problem. However, the administrative staff had been kind with him and he felt that he could go and have a try, even though he might not always be able to get his point across exactly. His language difficulties had been an issue throughout the PhD journey and particularly when analysing his primary data.

'Sometimes there is something I want to describe but I don't know the right word for the feeling. Also…especially when you're writing down the interviews, there is a lot of language that doesn't have the same meaning in English, I struggled in transcribing my interviews because it's in my local language.'

Tim had come to the university with an overall IELTS score of 6.0 and had found reading and particularly writing difficult at this level. Tim was embarrassed about this, and since his supervisor was not a native English speaker either, he felt this almost made him more embarrassed.

'My supervisor has been speaking English less time than me and she is really good.'

He had taken advantage of the English language classes that are provided by the university, and had saved enough money to pay for proof reading services when his progress reports were due to be submitted, yet this has impacted on his confidence in trying to mix with others. His problems of acculturation were not being addressed since he kept himself to himself at the university and mixed with non-native English-speaking friends and family at home. Tim's English language problem was therefore compounded in that Tim speaks his native language at home with his wife and children, and so his English language skills were not improving at the same rate as they might have done. When he presented at a conference in another institution,

he had successfully given the paper but then did not understand a question that someone in the audience had asked:

'I asked to repeat the question two times but he did not want (me) to understand and was angry.'

This excruciatingly embarrassing moment had affected his confidence to the point where he had not stayed around at the end of the day to network as he had planned to do and he did not want to repeat this experience again.

Tim and his wife had been part of a large community (of the same nationality) and whilst this had contributed to his slow English language development, it had helped the couple to bring their children up with a dual identity, knowing that they would be returning to their home country on completion of their degrees.

'Erm, I feel that, erm, I don't know, because I feel that if they were back home my progress would be faster, I think, but because my wife also study here I have to take the risk. Of course having little children while studying will slow your progress and we want to show them their nationality but also to learn English ways.'

6.2.3 Tim's Wellbeing

Tim suffered generally from a lack of confidence in his own abilities and this had affected him throughout his doctoral journey. His relationship with his supervisor had been a hugely positive influence on his wellbeing, since, as Elliot et al., (2017) also found, his lack of confidence had caused reticence to openly discuss his work with his supervisor, yet in Tim's case this had been met with positive reinforcement. His lack of confidence could also explain his need to overcompensate when working and putting in many hours to make the work as good as it could

be. His supervisor had boosted his confidence significantly, he reflected that when he felt his work was not good enough, she would encourage him and tell him that it was indeed good enough and that he would be alright.

'Sometimes I feel that my research is not, erm, is not... not very strong. But she told me it was good and this helped to convince me that it was good. She made me feel better when she told me this.'

Tim's overriding feeling on completion was a sense of pride and satisfaction, even though he had gone over time. He accepted that, given the circumstances of having a family with him to care for, he felt a sense of achievement, as can be seen in the following quote:

'I feel very happy about what I've achieved right now, although I finished it in 5 years, I feel very happy because I've got the children and also my wife studying her PhD, so I have to, sometimes I have to let my wife do her work, her tasks, so sometimes I have to take care of the children, and sometimes she takes care of the children, yeah, it's kind of like that, so we serve the job to take care of our children, and it really takes a lot of our time.'

The juggling of childcare and study between Tim and his wife had seemed to sustain all of the family, with the acceptance that this journey would be longer than usual. But given that Tim accepted this reality, he had been comfortable with his speed of progress.

'It takes a lot of time for childcare, especially, but also for the daily activity, for cooking, for everything. So sometimes if she has the, er, lot of tasks to do so I like her to do her tasks first and then I go back, and sometimes when I have a lot tasks she, she, she slow down her progress for me. I take them at 9.00 to school, then I go to university and arrive here at 9.30, then at 2.30 I have to take them back

from school so you can imagine it only gives me 5 or 6 hours of working. Erm, if I have a deadline I can work at home. But after they are sleeping I can do till late at night.'

Tim had the full support and empathy of his wife and this had certainly helped to maintain his good mental health. He had enjoyed being a PhD student, as had his wife, and the children had enjoyed their time so much they did not want to return to their home country. Tim chuckled when he reflected on the thought of his family and how happy they made him. He was extremely proud of them and what they had achieved in the last five years. The whole family had benefitted from the experience, both him and his wife had gained PhDs, and his children had gained English language fluency.

6.2.4 Tim's Support Network

Tim had had the same supervisor for the whole journey, which had meant a certain amount of stability throughout the process. His supervisor had been supportive and understanding of his situation, being a non-native English-speaking person herself. The relationship with his supervisor had therefore been a positive impact on his experience of being a doctoral candidate at the University of Salford. The supervisor had made him feel confident in his ability, boosting his self- esteem, even though Tim knew that his English language skills were lacking. The research design had been agreed from the start of the research process and the supervisor had been supportive of his work throughout the whole journey. This had therefore counter-balanced his poor self-efficacy. Tim described his supervisor as a kind person who always supported him, and that she was readily available for advice and guidance about the best way forward, when Tim was unsure what to do. Tim explained that his experience of supervision had changed over the five year period; during the first year he had had very close (and regular) supervision, with meetings every week, and then as time had gone by, the meetings had become less frequent

as Tim felt that he knew what was expected of him and he was able to just get on with it, as he explains in the following quote:

'I think during my first year she really monitored me, before the Interim we had a meeting about every week so we had regular meetings, but after that it was less regular, so maybe she believed that her student already knew what to do, so the meetings were about every month.'

Despite not having regular meetings after the end of the first year, Tim explained that his supervisor would still help by email if he had a question or problem that he could not solve himself. When reflecting on his experience of being supervised in this way, he realised that he had had an overwhelmingly positive experience.

Having his wife and children here with him had meant that he had taken a lot of time to settle in. They had found a primary school for their children and his wife had needed some healthcare, all of this had taken his time away from his study.

'There were a lot of times when I went to the hospital with my wife … she needed me there.'

Tim had many commitments in terms of medical appointments that he attended with his wife, who suffered with severe asthma, and despite the fact that his wife was capable of doing these things for herself, Tim felt that he had to be with her to ensure that everything was alright. He was impressed by the medical facilities, and was happy that his wife was receiving this level of care to the extent that the condition was under control.

Tim did not have a specific desk area for his study, he was given access to the Post Graduate Research Student room, and was expected to hot-desk. However, the room had provided a certain amount of friendship among the group and Tim was relatively happy with this location.

There had been a few students in the room at the times when Tim was able to study, but this had not been a barrier to timely completion, rather it had enriched his experience.

'I enjoy being in the PGR room, it is usually quiet but sometimes there is something going on and it is nice to speak with other PhD people. At least 6 or 7 people come every day. But the environment is very, very helpful because my friends, during the working hours, for example, from the morning till 12, they are very busy, they didn't chat very much, so they only chat during the lunch-time. So it's very, very helpful… I am very lucky, was very lucky to be in that room. So they're a source of support to you.'

6.2.5 Tim's Underlying Reasons for Untimely Completion

Tim was intrinsically motivated by a desire to succeed in life and this overwhelming drive had helped him to overcome significant barriers such as his low self-efficacy caused by his poor academic English language writing skills. Having lost close relatives in a natural disaster, he was also determined to look after his wife and children to the best of his ability, and this meant that at times he had to continue with little sleep. Tim and his wife had juggled their study and childcare and so although the study had taken 60 months, Tim was happy that both he and his wife were returning as doctors and their children were fluent English speakers. The underlying barriers that had compromised his ability to complete within time were his low self-esteem and the time he had spent with his wife and young family. Whilst he had shared the responsibilities of running a house and looking after children with his wife, and had no regrets about spending this time with them, he acknowledged that this all took time and that ultimately his study had taken longer to complete. He had just worked longer into the night to get work done.

6.3 Archie

Archie was a 43 year-old married male with four teenage children, his wife and 4 children were back home in Archie's country of origin, Saudi Arabia. He had an important job in a government ministry and was responsible for many staff there. He received his salary while he was here and had been granted an extension to complete the study, making a total of 58 months (without the corrections being completed). He was expecting to return to Saudi Arabia within the next two months, and return to his immediate family and his job, where he would receive much accolade and gain more respect for completing the PhD. He had extended family living in London and had frequently visited them during the PhD; he had started his study there, where he had been very happy, but had then transferred to Salford after the first year to join his supervisor.

6.3.1 Archie's Personal Drive

Archie had had problems with motivation from the time he arrived in Salford, what Tremblay et al., (2009) described as amotivation leading to the most negative consequences. He had started at another institution (in London) and had completed over 12 months there, then transferred to the University of Salford for what was supposed to be the final two years, but in fact, Archie had spent almost four years at Salford to complete his doctorate. He had found it hard to settle and had not taken well to the new environment. He preferred London as a city but had moved to Salford for the remainder of his study due to his supervisor moving. He spent most weekends in London, possibly 'avoiding' the reality of the doctoral study.

> *'I like it in London better than here…When I was there I lived with one of my cousins in his house and it is a nice house. I have another cousin there too, they are doing well there and erm… they have all the life happy you know. Their families…their kids are happy there too so they look after me when I go there.'*

Archie was blocking out the reality of being a PhD candidate in Salford, and enjoyed spending time away from the study. Procrastination, as a self-sabotaging block, has been addressed at Flinders University in Adelaide, Australia, where Kearns et al (2008) developed a program to give students the coping strategies and behaviours that help to overcome the blocks and complete in a timely manner. These issues are difficult to tease out, because doctoral students can be defensive about their position. 'Blaming' the supervisor (in Archie's case, both his supervisors), the institution (Archie blames the University for assigning a 'poor' replacement supervisor), the language and cultural barriers (Archie blames the university in general for his slow completion), whilst being contributing factors, possibly cover the underlying reasons for his slow completion of study.

6.3.2 Archie's Self-Identity

Archie had subconsciously struggled with his self-identity throughout the PhD experience. His life was completely different here from that which he lived back in Saudi Arabia, and this affected his daily existence in terms of avoiding and denying tactics to deflect away from his feelings of inadequacy. His financial and power status were, on the surface, unchanged; for example, he could afford to travel to London regularly in his car and could afford to purchase items needed to facilitate study, such as a laptop and software, luxuries such as designer clothes, and travel around the UK with his cousins. For example, he said:

'I like nice things you know... It feels good to have things. I need them!'

Yet on hermeneutic analysis, he was struggling with his self-identity as a student in that he was not perceived to be as important as he was back home. He 'needed' to feel important here and purchasing expensive items helped him to feel greater self-worth.

He had not published during his PhD, but had attended two conferences (one international) where his peers had presented. When he reflected on his four years in Salford, he felt bad that it had taken so long to complete but his pride had not allowed him to be seen to be defeated

'I feel bad when I think about it. I should complete sooner but it is quite hard to do actually. In Saudi my wife and family are there and it is very busy in the home you know and we have a lot of people to help us. Here it is just me! I cannot do everything you know, it is quite hard.'

6.3.3 Archie's Wellbeing

Archie was an extremely proud man and was naturally unsure about appearing vulnerable and sharing what he considered to be private information about his life. Upon hermeneutic sense making and interpretation, it became apparent that Archie had suffered a knock to his confidence and general demeanour when he followed his supervisor to Salford, only to be left again. He had felt out of his depth and unsure about the best way forward, but had been unable to articulate this. His defence against this had been to procrastinate and to deflect attention (for himself) by being with his wider family in London, hiding away from the study. For example, he said:

'I always feel good and happy with my family in London … you know … that is a better option for me. It was difficult to come to Salford you know. My new supervisor, well, he didn't think my work was good … I was worried for a time but it passed and I … I am alright now. He doesn't know my subject, he thinks in a different way.'

He was dismissive of the new supervisor because he had felt devalued by him and his response to this was to procrastinate – he did not want to do the study with this new supervisor. His self-esteem had previously been so high, for example, he used to dress in smart designer clothes

every day, but towards the end of the study he reflected that he had '*slipped a bit'* because he had not had the support of his supervisor.

In summary, Archie had followed his supervisor to Salford, only to be abandoned again, and this had meant that he had felt lost and alone, without his administrators and family to support him. However, because of his perceived status and financial power, he refused to admit that he was feeling vulnerable and this had perpetuated to the extent that he was avoiding the reality of his life in Salford.

6.3.4 Archie's Support Network

Archie had a strong and stable support network back in his home country, Saudi Arabia, in the form of his wife and four teenage children, his personal assistant, staff and colleagues, and his wider family; but in the UK, he was alone, save for his cousins who lived in London.

Archie had gone back to Saudi Arabia several times to visit family and friends, but his main social life was in London with his cousins and their families, and he travelled there regularly to be with them. In terms of scholarly communities, Archie did not feel any belonging in Salford, he was rooted in his native culture and did not spend enough time in Salford to form bonds in communities.

> *'I don't really like it here…sorry about that…it's not so good for me to be here. I like it better in London with my cousins and their families you know… In Saudi Arabia we have a good social you know, I don't like it to be quiet… I like the noise of people around me. Here I just see my supervisor…and then I go out and work in my flat.'*

From this point of view, his time away from Salford was the most enjoyable time, and his time spent in Salford was where he was unhappy. He had ended up with a problem in that he had

committed to do this in the first place, then had been forced to move to Salford, then had been left feeling isolated when the supervisor had left. However, he had attended English language training courses and enjoyed the rapport and banter that these afforded, but this was the only scholarly community he had engaged with; he appeared not to be particularly interested in furthering his English language skills. However, on hermeneutic interpretation of this apparent nonchalance with furthering his English language skills, Archie was feeling insecure without his regular support network around him, and he covered this by appearing to be carefree and jovial in class. However, he was unable to hide these insecurities when dealing with the administrative processes that he had been required to complete as part of the doctoral process. For example, completing the necessary paperwork throughout the doctoral journey (all of which he had to personally complete in English) had been troublesome. He had missed his support network and particularly his personal assistant. For example:

'I have a personal assistant back home who takes care of this kind of thing but his English isn't good enough to sort out problems here'.

He had had to sort out his move to Salford on his own, with limited help from his cousins. This, he explained, had taken a lot of time and therefore he had:

'lost time for the PhD.'

Hermeneutic interpretation of this superficial point, with the addition of interpretation of his writing techniques (writing in Arabic and then 'finding it difficult' to translate to English) led to the analysis that these presented reasons for his slow progress on his PhD were actually due to Archie procrastinating because of his inability to be truthful about his lack of English language ability. He was a proud person who held a responsible job. Making meaning from this, it could be interpreted that Archie was feeling out of his depth here without his staff and

family around him. He had lost his support network in coming here and was finding it difficult to make any real progress, as shown in the following comment:

'I think I need my assistant back when I go back home so he can sort me out'

Archie had moved to Manchester to be with his old supervisor, but then he [supervisor] had left the university too and Archie was left with no supervisor, in what was supposed to be his final year. His lived experience was that he had felt unsupported at the loss of his supervisor – his support network was depleted even further, and he lacked the stability that he needed.

'I should ...stayed in London, with no supervisor, no family… nothing… it was hard…' he trailed off.

This shows that the supervisor had almost caused Archie to give up and go back, in line with the findings in Tan & Meijer (2001). He had felt a huge shock that the supervisor had left the university and had been hit hard by this.

'It was the hardest time for me. I came to Manchester to continue, but I couldn't…My cousin came to stay with me for a while and that was good, but it was hard.'

I asked Archie to tell me about the supervisor he had been assigned after his previous supervisor's departure. He pulled his face to express distaste for the new supervisor and became quite agitated and angry when reflecting on his lived experience, showing the depth of feeling against his second supervisor. The relationship lacked any trust and respect, and these were characteristics that were extremely important to Archie's self-esteem. He had found the relationship difficult to manage; in Saudi Arabia he was in control of his life and people respected him.

'He was okay in the end, I mean, I passed, but he was not like my old supervisor, I don't trust him, he didn't like me…or my thesis. But now I have no time for him, he didn't help me, I will never help him.'

Archie's lived experience was a strongly negative one; the deep upset caused by what seemed to Archie as being a betrayal by the first supervisor to him personally, was clear. This had been followed by Archie and his second supervisor having a poor relationship with no trust and respect. Archie felt that his study had therefore been compromised by the actions of both his supervisors; the first for leaving and the second for not supporting him adequately. Under hermeneutic interpretation, however, it emerged that Archie's feelings of isolation without his regular support network, combined with his pride and status, had contributed to the study taking longer than expected.

6.3.5 Archie's Underlying Reasons for Untimely Completion

The underlying reasons why Archie took longer to complete than expected can be attributed to a complex set of factors. Whilst he blames the two supervisors and the University, the reality is that he had felt abandoned when he had moved from London to Salford to follow his supervisor. Archie had then avoided the work and procrastinated, which had compounded the problem. This had caused stress and anxiety, which had been further compounded by a poor relationship with the assigned supervisor. He felt isolated without his family and staff around him to support him (for example in drafting work for his approval, rather than having to compose the work for himself) and spent weekends in London, away from the study. He felt a loss of identity at being here without his personal assistant, who had done his administrative work for him back in his country of origin.

6.4 John

John was a 42 year-old married male with four children and they all moved to the UK together, at the start of John's PhD. He was a lecturer back in his home country, Libya, and was hoping to gain a promotion on his return to his home university. His whole family had been sponsored by the university and John had seen it as a great opportunity to come to the UK to study. The PhD journey had taken 56 months, and the family were due to return to Libya at the end of the academic year. His children, at the time of the interview, were 16, 14, 13, and 11 years of age, and had benefitted from almost five years' education in the UK. The children had also studied at an Arabic school at weekends so that they would be able to return to Libya on completion of John's PhD. His wife speaks little English and stays mainly in the home to look after John and the children.

6.4.1 John's Personal Drive

John was intrinsically motivated to come to the UK to study as he saw it as an opportunity for himself and his family, rather than seeing it as an educational experience solely for himself and to benefit his own career. His home country (Libya) had been a difficult environment to raise his family safely and he had enjoyed being in Salford for almost five years. He had mixed mainly with people from his home country, with little integration with native English speakers and so his English language ability had been hampered to a certain extent.

> *'Well there was an opportunity to come here with my family, so we all came to UK. I have three boys and one daughter, they are 11, 13, 14 and 16. My daughter is the oldest, she is doing her school exams now. They go to English school and to the Arabic school on Saturdays as well to keep their language. They speak very good English – better than me! They are like English kids now!'*

His daughter had spent her whole secondary education here and had become fluent in English within the first 6 months of being here. She was now more comfortable speaking in English than in Arabic and had, unlike her parents, developed friendships with others in English. She did not want to return to Libya and John had found this difficult to cope with because he was trying to maintain the family's cultural identity, and as such she was expected to help out in the family until she married. Unfortunately, this lack of acculturation into British society on John's part had not been reconciled with his daughter's need to grow up in a westernised society. This had caused arguments in the family and she had threatened to leave home and stay in the UK with friends, but at the time of the interview she was still considered a minor and her father would have the final decision. This links with the work by Deci & Ryan, (2010), on the three basic innate psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness; John and his daughter could not reconcile their different perceptions of existence. This had affected John's personal drive to complete both positively and negatively; he wanted to complete his doctoral study so that the family could return to the Middle East but also negatively in that he was spending mental and physical energy (his time) in trying to keep his daughter in her 'culturally normal' position.

John had shown high persistence during his study in terms of his poor relationship with his supervisor. John's persistence was deep-rooted because he knew that the family's stay in the UK was determinant on his doctoral candidacy.

'*What can I do? I must continue…I have no choice.*'

He had experienced his supervisor shouting at him, and this had severely damaged his motivation, but he would not allow this to jeopardise his family's sojourn. John had decided to continue with this person as he was a senior academic and well respected in his field, but the

relationship had caused John to feel uncomfortable and he resented this experience on reflection. This will be further explored in Section 4.8.4.

6.4.2 John's Self-Identity

John's self-identity appeared to have remained unchanged externally, for example, he still had his salary paid to him and although this had not stretched as far in the UK, his wife had been able to shop and cook in a relatively frugal way in the local markets; thus, his financial and power status had remained intact. He had felt part of a community of people from his home country in the area where he rented his flat and had not been challenged to face a new environment. In some ways, he had not suffered any kind of culture shock that Zhou et al., (2008) identified, since his study and his home life were still very much rooted in his native culture. His wife prepared food for him each day and he returned to them every evening.

'We eat the same foods here really…and do the same things here, it is ok actually. My wife doesn't like English food' (smiles and apologises).

His children had been self-sufficient in terms of schooling, with his daughter taking the lead and translating where necessary. Because he had mixed with other colleagues from Libya and rarely left the community of Arabic speakers, the three commonalities found in the other nine participants did not apply with John; he had remained in an Arabic community and so had not had his self-identity challenged from a cultural viewpoint, he had worked on his PhD study as if it were a job and thus, had not felt like a student, and his wife's role in the home remaining unchanged had supported his self-identity as the head of the household. However, deep down, John clearly felt that he had sacrificed his own happiness for that of his family, and whilst feeling no resentment towards this, he did feel resentment towards his supervisor, in particular. Using the word '*destroyed*' (see Section 4.7.4) depicts the amount of hurt that the supervisor had caused, and John had learned to cope with this without it affecting his family's happiness.

He was proud to have completed the work and to have given his family the opportunity, and this was the overriding emotion felt at the time of the interview.

6.4.3 John's Wellbeing

It was clear from John's description of his family that they were all very happy living in the UK, even his wife, whose role in the family had remained unchanged. They had missed their wider family back in Libya, but had made lots of good friends in the Arabic community and his daughter had made many English friends. As John reflected on his experience, he explained that he had found the work hard to do, but his family were happy and safe, and that was the most important thing. Making meaning of this, it was apparent that John had personally not been happy in his study, but this had been a worthy sacrifice (in line with the study conducted by Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw., 2012), as his family were safe, secure, and happy. He spoke with great pride about his children and he wanted to be a good role model to them.

'They are all at very critical ages now, they are happy here they like English school – it is easier for them. The teachers are very good and they are nice. Back home the teachers are very strict...they shout every time.'

John's children attended English school during the week and Arabic school at weekend and they had found the English school to be preferable to the extent that they did not want to return to Libya. In addition, John's 13 year-old son had been diagnosed with asthma and this had not been previously diagnosed in Libya, suggesting that the healthcare received in the UK had been of a higher quality in terms of making a diagnosis and providing treatment for his condition.

'It is good because my middle son has a problem with his breathing and we have very very good care. One time he had a serious problem and we went to the hospital …my wife was very sad about that …but he was in hospital for two

days… and she stay there with him...in a chair. He has inhaler now to help him to breathe better.'

Despite his family being happy in the UK, which was John's priority, he appeared to be struggling with the level of detail required of PhD study with his relatively poor academic English language writing skills. It seemed to be that he felt trapped in this existence: his four children were doing well at both schools, his wife had adjusted to living in the UK although they remained within the Arabic community, but he was suffering from a lack of confidence in his own ability. For example, he said:

'It is hard doing a PhD study you know, all the time reading and writing. A PGR in my study room has a good supervisor and he helped me a lot, but not my supervisor.'

John further explained the problem with his supervisor and what he thought had caused it. He explained that his supervisor was held in high esteem in the university and that he had changed his opinion over time, since his supervisor always seemed to be too busy to support him. He had initially justified (to himself) his supervisor's lack of support as being acceptable since he did have a lot of work, but as time progressed and John's self-confidence deteriorated, John felt some resentment towards his supervisor. The language John used to describe his reaction to his supervisor's lack of support was very strong, demonstrating the depth of feeling. For example, he said:

' 'My supervisor destroyed me… I felt so bad but what can I do? I can't change the supervisor, I can't move to another … so I just worked and hoped it will get better.'

In summary, whilst John's mental wellbeing had been damaged by his supervisor and his feelings of not being good enough at academic English were evident (which in turn affected his self-efficacy) his standing in his family and community was such that John was able to cope with these potentially destructive influences, although these factors had undoubtedly caused the time to completion of study to go beyond the normal limits.

6.4.4 John's Support Network

As discussed previously, John had a strong family support network at home with him, in his wife and four children. They had maintained cultural norms in their way of life and were all supportive of John. It was important to John that his family maintained their cultural heritage, and this was played out in his daily life. For example, John completed his doctorate by treating it as a job. He worked hard on his thesis between normal working hours and then fully participated in his family life, as patriarch figure and head of the household. Maintaining normal patterns of behaviour in his life had certainly helped John to get through the struggle at university. This struggle was mainly due to his supervisor's lack of time for John and his attitude towards John in meetings, and this had caused John to feel unsupported. John repeated the word '*destroyed*' when referring to his supervisor, and this had clearly affected his self-esteem and self-confidence. For example, he said:

> *'My supervisor destroyed me…really…he told me my English was bad…he shouted a lot. I feel very bad at that time …my daughter helps me with my English, she tells me what to do!'*

John's English language skills were not as developed as they might have been, since John mixed with other Arabic speakers, not only at home and outside of university, but also with his PhD colleagues during the 'working' day. Interpretation of this is that it was important to John

to maintain his cultural heritage, despite being in a different environment; and so staying within his own language and culture made him feel that he was doing the right thing for his family.

6.4.5 John's Underlying Reasons for Untimely Completion

John had been intrinsically motivated to come to the UK because of a desire to move his family into a safe and secure environment. Raising his family in Libya had been difficult as there was the constant worry about security risks. The opportunity to complete a doctorate in the UK was the real driver for the study; his family would be in a different (and safe) environment. This intrinsic motivation had meant that John's persistence was deep-rooted because he knew that the family's stay in the UK was determinant on his doctoral candidacy.

John had a strong identity as a Libyan family man; he was immensely proud of his four children, and his wife was happy to fulfil her cultural identity of being a wife and mother. For this reason, John had not suffered any acculturation distress – he had remained in the Arabic speaking community and had not mixed in other communities. However, this in itself had caused problems in John's English language development; he had not been fully immersed in the culture and language.

John's wellbeing had suffered on two counts: his supervisor had not been respectful or treated John with dignity – often shouting at John and he reflected that this had nearly 'destroyed' him, and so his self-efficacy had deteriorated. He had felt trapped and had sacrificed his own personal happiness (in his poor relationship with his supervisor) for that of his family. Secondly, John's daughter, who was 16 years old, had settled (too) well in the UK and wanted to stay. This was in conflict with John's wish to return (at least) to the Middle East, if not Libya.

This had affected John's personal drive to complete both positively and negatively; he wanted to complete his doctoral study so that the family could return to the Middle East but also

negatively in that he was spending mental and physical energy (his time) in trying to keep his daughter in her 'culturally normal' position.

6.5 Phillip

Phillip was a 36 year-old, Egyptian, married male, with one primary school age daughter. His wife works as a healthcare professional in a town 300 miles away, and Phillip had been commuting to see his wife and daughter since they joined him in the UK. Phillip had completed an MSc degree at Salford before embarking on the PhD. He had taken almost 60 months to complete, with a one year interruption period. His father paid his fees and his living expenses initially, and his wife paid for herself and their daughter in the town where she was based. When Phillip started to work he was able to pay his own living expenses, but the financial strain and feelings of guilt that his father was still funding him had caused him distress during the first two years of the PhD.

6.5.1 Phillip's Personal Drive

Phillip had originally only intended to come to the UK to complete a one-year masters degree. However, he had thrived on the course and had discovered that he loved to study (usually resulting in the most positive consequences, according to Tremblay et al., 2009), so when one of his professors said that he had the capability to complete a PhD, he decided to stay on. Phillip was a highly motivated person - his motivation was deeply intrinsic, with high expectations of himself and those around him. His parents had both been healthcare professionals (his deceased mother being a psychiatrist) and the family were wealthy and stable. Phillip's wife was also working as a healthcare professional back in their country of origin, Egypt, during Phillip's MSc degree and the first few months of his PhD, when she came to the UK with their daughter after she had found work. Phillip's wife had been initially unsupportive of his wish to continue on to the PhD, as the following extract shows:

'I guess I'm motivated from my family, from my Dad, you know when I told him that there was an opportunity to go for a PhD he said yeah don't waste it don't say no. But from my wife no because at the time she was still back home and she thought that she would have to move or we're gonna have to struggle a bit….. so that was quite a struggle…she wasn't negative but she wasn't really positive as well, she was neutral at that time because she wasn't really happy with it…sorry' (embarrassed laugh).

Phillip felt indebted to his father for giving him this opportunity, but this brought with it a significant amount of pressure. He also felt guilt for needing his father to fund him in his thirties, and this was compounded by his wife's initial reluctance.

'My dad is my mentor, he has a whole history and a story to learn from and I just wanted to make him proud, nobody in my family has done that, he needs to see this and that he hasn't wasted his money.'

Phillip had almost withdrawn from the PhD after the second week, when he had attended what he described as a '*watershed moment conference*' because it had had such an impact on his self-confidence and ultimately his self-esteem. His father had been the person to support him through this time, as the following quote shows:

'I called my dad and I told him that this is not for me… I'm done and he said just give it a couple of days, if you still feel like that then come home but this is what happened it was really…really tough. So my dad never doubted me and he never let me down so I had to keep going…I had to finish.'

This demonstrates the utter self-determination to complete the PhD; Phillip felt duty bound to persist and get through this 'tough time' to make his father proud of his achievement.

6.5.2 Phillip's Self-Identity

Phillip had struggled with his self-identity on several levels, but mainly because of his wife's initial reluctance about him studying for a PhD and his doubts about whether or not he was doing the right thing as a husband and father. He felt he was in the wrong place – that he should be earning an income and supporting (and living with) his wife and daughter. He had found it difficult to live alone in Salford, never having lived alone before, and this had led him to challenge himself to develop better housework and cooking skills, although this had taken some time.

> *'I taught myself a lot of things at that time, you know there was a positive thing to that – the upside is, you know, when you are alone you find out what you are capable of and there was time to learn a lot of stuff…like…housework, I used to do it before but I wasn't good at it, but now, I'm really good…cleaning, cooking you know I can really take care of myself and other people not just myself.'*

Phillip had found it difficult to adapt to living as a married man with his wife living a long distance away. He could not reconcile his two different lives – one as a husband and father, and one as a student living alone. He understood that the PhD journey itself was going to be tough (as highlighted in work by authors such as Porter, 2012), but had not anticipated that these conflicting self-identities would be a contributing factor to the depression that followed. Referring to his marriage almost collapsing, he said:

> *'I'm a man's man and I guess you learn during the PhD that it is gonna take it out of you at some point. I hadn't seen that coming though. I didn't know who I was anymore'*

Phillip was very self-aware of his dilemma of having multiple competing roles, as highlighted by Reese (2014) and so effectively leading two different lives. He adjusted his behaviour

accordingly, for example, he did not put himself in situations that could have been perceived as being potentially damaging to his marriage.

'Well I was aware that I was a male married man so everything has to be right, you don't want to appear unprofessional, I didn't want to jeopardise anything with my wife, so it might have I guess. It made it difficult because she wasn't living with me, you know, if we were living as a married couple with my daughter it would have been significantly less painful or less lonely er but yeah that's the reason probably coz erm yeah I was on my own I didn't want to do anything stupid so I didn't go out as much.'

Phillip had also struggled with his self-identity in terms of his financial status, since he was not earning his own money and had to rely on his father. This affected his self-esteem, he was a thirty-six year-old man but he was living as a child reliant on his father. Whilst his father is wealthy, he explained that he did not want to take advantage and therefore had to live a much quieter life than he would have done if he had been financially supporting himself.

'…erm…I was a grown man when I came here but when I arrived you know, I had a tight budget, my Dad's money…I had to live very frugally here, back home we're a well off family…and when I came here because of the currency situation the exchange rate was bad and so everything was so expensive. My dad would have had to work for 2, 3, 4 days for the price of a new jacket here so it sunk in that it's not right that I go out, so I had a tight budget and not much fun maybe.'

Phillip suffered a lack of confidence, not only in his own ability as a PhD candidate, but in his whole personal and professional identity. His feelings that he was not good enough, that he could not articulate himself properly in an academic context, were plaguing him.

'I was lost…and by lost I mean …10 days after I joined the PhD I went to a conference with my supervisor and … I sat down and I did not understand anything (emphatic speech) from the conference and I saw the demography of the people sitting there…they were all…I have nothing against any of them… but they were all white Anglo Saxon people…really tall, nobody like me… you know I'm a foreigner, short, dark (embarrassed laugh). But that's the thing it was… for me it was like really discouraging at the time…how am I going to break through this type of… like… community?'

After the first disastrous conference episode, he had withdrawn even further into himself as he felt he had lost his professional identity and didn't feel that he fitted in with this community, who seemed to know so much and seemed to be very comfortable; he perceived that he was not good enough, as shown by the following, where Phillip is describing the conference delegates.

'I felt like I wasn't good enough, all I thought about was that these guys are educated, they have a different kind of education, probably a higher quality education than I did because you know the quality difference between Egypt and the UK is significant and.. and… despite me having the best quality of education from back home I thought it wasn't enough for me and because I wasn't like this high academic student during my undergrad I thought no, I wouldn't be able to do this.'

Phillip therefore perceived his own self-identity to be weak and considered himself to be uneducated in comparison to the other delegates. In addition to lacking in confidence in himself generally, Phillip had also felt out of place and unstable in his subject choice during the first

year of his PhD. He had started to sink into depression, although he was not aware of this at the time.

'I felt lost… erm… I didn't understand enough but PhDs live off this grey area, this is my understanding now but at the time it was like no… I..I..I.. won't be able to do it… I don't have the capacity to do it, this is what I thought…. yeah I was really struggling just to believe that I would go through the first year, not even finish so….'

He felt that he did not fit in and could only ever be on the margins of this society of people.

'I felt well… a little bit lonely, coz you're not British, you're not 100% integrated, and I was really looking forward to being integrated in the community but the thing is I still understand that I'm not ever going to be 100% integrated because I spent the first thirty years of my life in a different country with a different culture, not even a western culture, it is a different culture, so that left me a bit lonely I guess.'

It was only after the Interim Assessment (end of first year examination) that he had started to feel better about himself. His self-identity as a 'good' student was returning, as he had considered himself to be when he was an MSc student, and he was back to feeling more comfortable and confident.

'After the IA my confidence level rose so much because the two examiners gave me really good feedback, they said yeah what you are doing is okay, it's good and you have good justifications for your decisions and I thought… well I doubted myself, and when I finished and came out my supervisor said to me that there was no doubt that I was gonna pass, they were just questioning me to see if I got it,

almost like a mini viva to train yourself, so yeah after that my confidence started to improve a bit. If it wasn't for the IA I would have still been doubting myself because I doubted myself every single day in the first year.'

In summary, Phillip had struggled with his self-identity of holding down multiple (and often competing) roles as a 36 year-old non-native English-speaking man, husband, father, student and son.

6.5.3 Phillip's Wellbeing

Phillip had been diagnosed with depression after the first few months of being on the PhD, although he reflected that this had probably started right at the beginning of the journey because of his lack of confidence being exacerbated by his first conference experience. He described his experience of feeling lost, frustrated and unsure of what he was doing here at all.

'I got really frustrated and I thought this is not cut for me and I should go home. I felt very bad, very low. So the beginning of my journey was really bad, this day (referring to the conference) was really a turning point in my life. This was one of the worst days in my life… in terms of being.. er.... frustrated, having no confidence at all that I could complete the task given to me.'

After Phillip was diagnosed with depression he was prescribed a combination of medication and talking therapy (which he did not take), although it took some time for the medication to take effect, when Phillip was in the second year.

'After the first year, I gained a lot of weight, I was depressed, I was not in a good place at all. I went to the doctor and they prescribed some antidepressant medications, but yeah when I finished the first year I was eating a lot. After a while when I started to feel better, my confidence improved a bit I started

watching my diet a bit more and going to the gym I felt mentally sharper and more capable of thinking about complex methodologies… the whole process was easier for me.'

Unfortunately, when Phillip had felt under pressure to complete his PhD at the end of the journey, his depression returned as did his poor eating habits. However, this time he was more self-aware and realised that this was happening, thus he was able self-regulate his eating and by gaining this self-control he was able to prevent the pervasive nature of his depression from spreading any further.

'When I was writing up and not seeing my daughter as much as I wanted to I started eating a lot again and gaining a lot of weight. I was depressed again but this time I knew the solution was to stop eating you know. I knew I couldn't do a full time job write up a PhD, be a father and a husband and be unfit. I wanted to be a good father to her and watching my diet… I guess I was an emotional eater but then when I finished the PhD and the relationship with my wife was getting better I thought ok I need to get back on track so I started watching my diet, exercising more and I felt a bit sharper.'

Phillip demonstrated during the interview that he was extremely self-aware of his mental and physical health during the PhD journey and how these could impact on his success as a PhD candidate.

'I mean this is also what the PhD time gave me, I have always been physically fit, but mental – I never educated myself in mental health it never occurred to me but when I came here the time available gave the chance to read about it, eating well and it made me a little bit sharper you know, keeping fit helps your morale.'

Phillip had suffered difficulties in the marriage to the extent that they were separated and preparing for divorce. The PhD journey had been difficult from the very first day for him in terms of his relationship with his wife, and this had contributed to his depression.

'I had personal circumstances or…you know…kind of…issues within my marriage, we were going through a bad phase and that gave me doubts.. erm… okay, I'm under a lot of stress, and I asked myself am I going to finish or not?'

Phillip expressed his loneliness in an open way and explained some of the activities, such as learning German and joining a gym, which had helped to ease this loneliness. However, none of these activities could replace what he was really searching for, which was a close companion, in other words his wife.

'I made a couple of friends but that was it. There was no family, I went home every four months but there was no social life. Even my friends from the Masters course, I was really good friends with them, but they went home after the masters so I was alone. I drink but I'm not really a heavy drinker so it's not like I can go to the pub on a Friday night and spend like the whole night there and drink 10 pints – I'd love to but I just can't do it! I couldn't compete!'

Interestingly, in agreement with Wright and Cochrane (2000), who said that students that had negotiated few developmental stages in life tend to be psychologically less robust, Phillip had found that the life experiences that he had endured had strengthened his mental wellbeing. He said that he had become more resilient as the PhD journey had gone on, and that things that used to make him feel stressed no longer had the same effect.

In summary, the depression that Phillip suffered was a culmination of several things that happened during the first year of the PhD. Firstly, the lack of support from his wife in the early

days, the loneliness caused by missing his wife and daughter and wider family, the problems adapting to being a PhD student and eventually, therefore, even questioning the value of his own existence. Once Phillip had received medication for depression and had become more self-aware, during the second year, he then faced the problems with his wife, which knocked him back again. His occupancy with his full-time job helped him through the worst of the depression as he had been kept busy, and the final acceptance that it was not going to be perfect and that he must submit drove him to complete the study.

6.5.4 Phillip's Support Network

Phillip had felt well supported by his father and brother, and after initial scepticism, eventually his wife had been supportive, but his mental health had deteriorated to such an extent that he needed medication and was advised to take counselling. He had refused this as he felt that it was not a culturally acceptable thing for a man to do, even though his late mother had been a psychiatrist.

> *'I didn't have counselling here, it's a cultural thing, it's maybe a family thing having you know I had support from my dad, maybe if I didn't support from my dad and my brother maybe I would have had counselling. But I had that support network around me, and it was important.'*

During the second year, Phillip's marriage had started to deteriorate, and he reflected that this was probably due to spending too much time apart, with him in Salford and his wife and daughter starting a new life nearly 300 miles away. His immediate support network (his wife) was slipping away from him and he felt unable to do anything to help the situation. His lived experience of being a doctoral candidate as well as being an employee, without his wife by his side, was difficult to bear. Their limitations due to their work locations hindered any kind of resolution being found.

'I was having a tough time with my wife, we were not getting along at all and I had started a new job in Manchester, so I went for an interruption period and the university were really understanding because I was almost divorced at that time.'

The interruption period lasted for one year and during this time Phillip was able to return to his wife and daughter every other weekend. This had improved the relationship with his wife because, despite her having a professional career and her own independence, she felt supported by her husband. Their daughter was also happier during this time; she was enjoying her English school and had settled in well. Phillip's daughter's education had been an important factor in him wanting them to join him in the UK.

'My daughter's education influenced my thinking… I found the quality of the education in this country is quite high. If I had done my bachelors here it would have been a different story for me and so I thought that my daughter deserved this kind of opportunity so it was me thinking yeah she needs to do this, whatever it takes for her to be educated here. I knew that if she were educated here she would have a great opportunity, so I really wanted that for her. Even if she went back eventually she would have a great degree and be able to get a great job, I hope very good experience as well.'

His daughter really enjoyed the whole experience of being educated here, the extra-curricular activities – she played in the netball team and played violin in the orchestra, and Phillip was very proud of her achievements in adjusting to a new life in the UK. In his self-identities as a father to his daughter and as a husband to his wife, Phillip's lived experience was a positive one. He was simultaneously supporting his family, and being supported by them, as the positives of the family being in the UK were apparent.

'I definitely made the right decision to bring her here if she gets a university degree, whatever it is I would love for her to be a university graduate. If me getting a PhD means that she gets all her education here then it is worth it.'

It can be seen from the above quote, that Phillip was not putting his own PhD study at the forefront of his mind; his focus was for his daughter and the benefits she would gain from being educated here. His experience of being a doctoral candidate had afforded his daughter huge benefits and this had improved the quality of Phillip's family life.

6.5.5 Phillip's Underlying Reasons for Untimely Completion

Phillip possessed a deep intrinsic motivation to study for a doctorate as he wanted his father (who was funding this experience) to be proud of his accomplishment. Unfortunately, he had struggled with his self-identity throughout the study journey as he was holding down multiple (and often competing) roles as a 36 year-old non-native English-speaking man, husband, father, student and son. This had led to Phillip becoming depressed, as a culmination of needing to make his father proud, struggling to cope with the initial lack of support from his wife, the loneliness caused by missing his wife and daughter and wider family, and the problems of adapting to being a PhD student, including being able to articulate himself effectively in academic contexts. This had become so bad that he had even questioned the value of his own existence. Once Phillip had received medication for depression and had become more self-aware, during the second year, he then faced the problems in his marriage, which knocked him back again. His occupancy with his full-time job helped him through the worst of the depression as he had been kept busy, and the final acceptance that it was not going to be perfect and that he must submit drove him, finally, to complete the study. At the end of the study journey, he reflected that even though it had been a difficult time in his life and he had made

personal sacrifices, he was glad that he had given his daughter the chance to have a good education (and potentially a new life) in the UK.

6.6 Meg

Meg was a fifty-three year-old, Libyan married mother of four children (two sons and two daughters), aged 28, 26, 23 and 15. Her youngest child (15 years of age) was due to complete his GCSE exams at the time of the interview, and the other three were all studying in higher education. Meg had taken almost 6 years to complete her PhD study, although one year was taken as an interruption as the war had caused her great distress and she had been unable to continue her study. Meg was an academic Head of Department back in her home university, and so the motivation to study her PhD was not for career purposes because there was no promotion or advantage of having the PhD. Her real motivation had come from wanting to come to the UK to allow her children to have a British education in a safe environment. Meg's husband was a medical professional and also held a senior position, but he had been unable to get a visa and so he had stayed back for the first four years, but had then joined the rest of the family in Salford, where he set up his own business – not related to his profession. Her parents and siblings were back in Libya and been subjected to terrible living conditions during Meg's doctoral experience, and this had affected her progress as she was terrified that something was going to happen to them.

6.6.1 Meg's Personal Drive

Meg was also intrinsically motivated to come to the UK for the sake of her family's safety and security; although she was not intrinsically motivated to complete the study – this was extrinsic motivation, in that she had run out of time and had to complete (compliance). She already held the post of Head of Department in her university in Libya and so the doctorate did not mean any promotion or financial gain, yet it meant that she could move her family (she has a husband

and four children) to the UK and they would all be sponsored. She was motivated by the need to keep her husband and children safe, with access to a good education, life in a safe country, and healthcare for one of children. It was an opportunity that was open to other academics and since Meg did not have a PhD, she took the opportunity happily, because, in fact, Meg saw this as a great opportunity for the whole family to escape from the situation in Libya. On the outside, she appeared to be extrinsically motivated by compliance (Deci et al, 1991), but this was not her reality. Her husband was a medical professional and was very highly paid, a job which he continued for four years into Meg's doctorate, at which point he was able to secure his visa and left his job to be with his family.

During the doctoral journey, Meg had been 'superficially' motivated by her colleagues around her and had developed some close friendships with other doctoral candidates. The first four years she had effectively been living as a single parent, her husband was still working in the Middle East and was financially supporting them, and so it was her friends and colleagues that helped her to keep going. One particular friend had motivated her most strongly, she laughed as she recalled that this person had said that she '*was clever and she must finish this'* and that Meg would be a '*highly respected doctor'* and this pushed Meg to keep going and ultimately complete the PhD.

6.6.2 Meg's Self-Identity

Meg's cultural self-identity as a Libyan married mother of four children, was her primary identity. Whilst she had a senior position as a Head of Department, this was not her focus, and so she did not struggle with the 'conflicted' multiple identities identified by Reese (2014), as Phillip had done for example; she simply compartmentalised them. Whilst she was at university, her children were at school or studying in higher education themselves and so she was free to identify as a student; she enjoyed studying and she relished her student identity,

taking advantage of many training courses and being active in the research activities of the department. However, at 4pm each day, she returned to what she saw as her primary role, that of being a wife and mother.

'As a mother you have lots of responsibility to your husband and to your children'

Meg put her husband's and children's needs before her own, as per her cultural norm, and this gave her personal satisfaction, she felt she was doing the right thing in caring for them. Because the children were older, she did not struggle with feeling that she was jeopardising her family duties, rather, she was able to spend time with them in the evenings and she was happy that they were in a safe place and receiving a good education. Her own career and the personal sacrifice of leaving her parents and siblings behind was secondary to her husband and children being safe and well. For example, she said:

'We have a very good income there, but this is nothing – the safety of my children is the most important thing. I have put my children first, as a mother our lives are second, especially for safety.'

Meg's lived experience, in terms of her changed self-identity as a doctoral candidate rather than her senior job role back in Libya, had weakened her financial and power status, she had lost her self-identity as a respected academic, but Meg was relatively unperturbed about this, she saw it as a worthwhile trade-off for her family's new life in the UK.

'I thought I would go back and train people and make a difference and because I got a lot of promises I felt that I was doing something good and when I finished the data collection I sent it back to them and they were really pleased and we were going to change everything in the department…But it is all frozen now and it won't happen. It's ok… we can manage.'

Meg phenomenologically claimed that she did not want to return to Libya because of the situation, and on hermeneutic analysis, it became clear that, during the doctoral candidacy, she had not actually wanted to complete in a short time, because this would have meant the whole family would have had no reason to stay in the UK. Her priority, and therefore her primary self-identity, was that of a mother, regardless of any other personal sacrifices that had been made or how that was perceived by others (such as her colleagues in Libya or her supervisor here). Her self-identity as a mother meant the priority of safety and security first, with the added benefit of healthcare and education for her family. Two quotes demonstrate this point:

'My youngest has not finished his education here, I want him to finish his study here first.'

and

'My 23 year-old wants to go back but he is sick and there is no healthcare, you know I send paracetamol back to my mum, she needs it, and there is nothing there.'

In summary, Meg's cultural self-identity as a wife and mother had been strengthened during the journey of the doctorate, and as the situation in Libya deteriorated, her self-conviction that she was indeed doing the right thing became consolidated.

6.6.3 Meg's Wellbeing

The ongoing war and security risks in Libya had had a devastating consequence on Meg's self-efficacy, as shown in her phenomenological claims of her lived experience. Meg had taken a years' interruption because she realised that she was not progressing, demonstrating that her personal resilience had been shattered to the point she could not continue. For example, she said:

'There was bombing, there was killing… my family are there…so I couldn't work. I did nothing in that year. I had bad dreams.'

On hermeneutic analysis of this claim, it can be seen that Meg's psychological state had been affected – her self-efficacy was damaged and she had no personal resilience; her sleeping hours were plagued by nightmares, and her waking hours were spent worrying about her parents and siblings, causing her to lack the ability to concentrate on her study. With reference to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, whilst Meg's basic human needs were being met for her own personal existence, those of her family were in jeopardy, and since the needs are ordered in successive levels, she was unable to aspire to fulfil the higher needs of growth; her self-esteem and self-actualisation were out of reach. Her personal sacrifice (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012) was that she had left behind her parents and siblings in order to focus on the safety of herself and her children. She had mentally tortured herself that whilst she was safe here, her wider family were in danger. For example:

'I am not normal. I couldn't do it. I didn't want to stretch it out, but I couldn't think… I couldn't do anything. Just trying to make contact with my family. Emotionally very active, because people are dying and their lives are changing and we are here.'

Meg's faith had been an important factor in her lived experience of being a doctoral candidate. She believed that God was watching over her and was guiding her through this journey, as shown in the following:

'I've been on a confidence journey... I believe in God so it is out of my hands… This was what I was supposed to be doing.'

Meg's self-efficacy had therefore been severely affected by the war in Libya and her mental wellbeing had suffered as a result of this. She had been forced to take a years' interruption and she would have taken longer if she had been allowed to do so. Her personal resilience was not such that she could compartmentalise her worry and stress, it was pervading every minute of her life, even when sleeping.

6.6.4 Meg's Support Network

Meg reflected that she was blessed with a strong support network around her. Her husband was a 'modern man' and was supportive of her student identity, her children were old enough to be a support to her too, her faith was a source of strength to her, and her wider family (including her parents) were supportive from Libya.

'In some ways my husband is really helpful, he does everything, my children are my target more than myself. They didn't put this pressure on me, I put this pressure on myself. I wanted to cook, to clean, to look after them all because this is my role, but when my husband comes in, he takes over and helps with everything and he takes responsibility and so I can relax.'

Meg felt that she was in control of her life and that her family were thriving in the UK. She felt supported from her family, and they appeared to be a tight unit, which was highlighted as an important factor in the study conducted by Elliot et al., (2017). In Wasburn-Moses (2005), a satisfaction survey found that the area of least satisfaction was doctoral candidates' need to juggle work and family life with their overall workload, but in Meg's case, her daily juggle between being a doctoral candidate and being a wife / mother was an overriding positive lived experience.

On the other hand, Meg's supervisor had been a distant figure in her doctoral candidacy, as can be seen in the following quote:

'He never contacts me, if I had left it 6 months he would never contact me. This is his way.'

His support had therefore been minimal, despite attempts by the university to raise standards and have minimum requirements for supervisors, as recommended by several authors (Lee, 2012; Taylor, 2012; Elliot et al., 2016; Park, 2005; Delamont et al., 2000). However, hermeneutic analysis showed that this 'light touch' supervisory style suited Meg, as he was not

pushing her to complete and so the timeline was allowed to drift. This, along with the problems of academic English, gave Meg the space to work at her own pace; she was in no hurry to complete as this would have meant her family returning to Libya. The legitimate 'excuse' for not progressing as efficiently as possible was, therefore, useful to Meg.

Meg's scholarly community was more of a support to her; she enjoyed being part of a research community that was supportive and friendly. She had made some close friendships amongst her peers and they had been the ones that had 'supervised' her. For example,

'I did a mock viva with my friends and colleagues, attending lots of sessions, talking about research methodology…it was an amazing experience.'

In summary, Meg had been supported from her immediate family in the UK and her wider family in Libya. She had made close friendships with other doctoral candidates and had enjoyed being part of a scholarly community. Her lack of supervision had allowed Meg's progress to drift, and she was able to focus on what was important to her: her family's wellbeing.

6.6.5 Meg's Underlying Reasons for Untimely Completion

Meg was intrinsically motivated to initially come to the UK for the sake of her family's safety and security, not for the study itself; therefore, she was not motivated to complete the study – this was extrinsic motivation, in that she had run out of time and had to complete (compliance). She was motivated by the need to keep her husband and children safe, with access to a good education, life in a safe country, and healthcare for one of her children in particular.

Meg's primary identity, therefore, was that of a mother, regardless of any other personal sacrifices that had been made or how that was perceived by others. Her self-identity as a mother meant the priority of safety and security first, with the added benefit of healthcare and education for her family.

As a naturally caring person, Meg's self-efficacy had been severely affected by the war in Libya, where her parents and wider family were located, forcing her to take an interruption of study for 12 months. Her supervisor's 'light touch' style suited Meg, as he was not pushing her to complete and so the timeline was allowed to drift. This gave Meg the space to work at her own pace; she was in no hurry to complete as this would have meant her family returning to Libya. The legitimate 'excuse' for not progressing as efficiently as possible was, therefore, useful to Meg.

6.7 Chapter Summary

The primary data from SG2 have been presented, analysed and discussed in this chapter. The five participants of SG2 participated in in-depth, semi-structured, narrative style interviews, which were analysed using an IPA strategy. Four superordinate themes were interpreted as forming the basis of the Gestalt, with several related subordinate themes. The superordinate themes are the personal drive to complete the doctoral study; self-identity as a doctoral candidate; physical and mental wellbeing; and the support network around the candidate. The phenomenological claims and hermeneutic sense making were presented in this chapter through these four superordinate themes and related subordinate themes. The four superordinate themes were all manifested differently for each individual, since each person is made up of complex life experiences which all interrelate to form the set of ontological beliefs that the person holds about their doctoral experience.

The next chapter will draw out the commonalities and differences between the two groups of participants in a comparative IPA.

Chapter 7: Comparative IPA of the Timely and Untimely Completers

7.1 Chapter Introduction

The main study has explored ten lived experiences of being a non-native English-speaking doctoral candidate; five participants in Study Group 1 that had completed on time (Chapter 5), and five participants in Study Group 2 that were considered late completers (Chapter 6). This chapter will draw out potential commonalities and differences between the two groups, through a comparative analysis.

Undertaking a comparative IPA of two groups of completers enabled a deeper interpretation of claims made, with discriminating factors, so that the core, underlying reasons that contributed to timely or late completion could be uncovered. By giving the participants the time and trusting space to be able to confide their true reflections on their PhD experience, the deep and often hidden issues which affected their lives were able to be explored. It should be noted that since the study sample is small (two groups with five participants each) the comparisons are presented as comparative commonalities and differences and not as potential generalisations of the wider population.

7.2 IPA Superordinate Themes

A comparative IPA of the two groups of study participants resulted in the emergence of four superordinate themes with a number of subordinate themes, as shown in Table 7.1 overleaf.

Table 7.1 Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

	Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes
1	Personal Drive to Complete Doctoral Study	Motivation to Complete Doctoral Study Self-Determination & Persistence
2	Self-Identity as a Doctoral Candidate	Identifying as a Student Acculturation Financial and Power Status
3	Physical and Mental Wellbeing	Self-Efficacy and its impact on Self-Esteem Personal Resilience
4	Support Network	Family support Supervisor Relationship Scholarly Communities

Each participant manifested these themes differently, and these feelings were, for the most part held subconsciously. Verbatim quotes from the interviews were used to illustrate how the participants manifested these themes, and selected excerpts were chosen on the basis of their relevance to the theme. It is acknowledged that the interpretations are only taken through one lens and that these interpretations are influenced axiologically because of the researcher's position as a tutor and researcher.

7.3 Development of the Gestalt

A Gestalt (in the context of this study) is a framework or skeleton to understand how each of the participants experienced the doctoral journey and their manifested behaviours associated with the themes, rather like how the flesh and muscle exists on the skeleton.

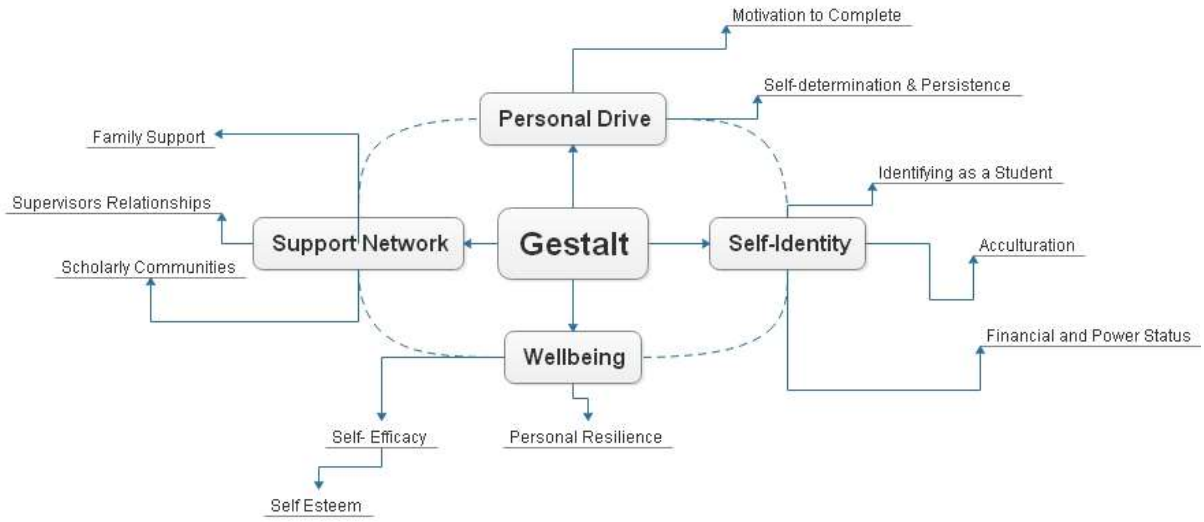


Figure 7.1 Gestalt of the Superordinate Themes

7.4 Associated Reflective Questions

The four superordinate themes each had an associated driving (self-reflective) question, as follows:

Personal Drive	→	*Why am I doing this?*
Self-Identity	→	*Who am I?*
Wellbeing	→	*How am I?*
Support Network	→	*Who can help me with this?*

These superordinate themes and related subordinate themes were presented, analysed and discussed in Chapter 5 (for Timely Completers) and Chapter 6 (for Late Completers). The analytical strategy of IPA has enabled a deep understanding of each individual's unique lived experience of the PhD journey. It can be seen that there are a complex set of interrelated factors that affect completion of PhD study for non-native English-speaking candidates, and sometimes these are hidden behind institutionally or socially acceptable reasons for untimely completion, such as different supervisors being appointed or the study context. Far deeper

underlying reasons for time to completion emerged in the idiographic analysis, such as the need to protect the family by studying in the UK, or having access to healthcare and a British education, and these are presented here as commonalities rather than generalisations.

7.5 Superordinate Theme One: Personal Drive to Complete Doctoral Study

The first superordinate theme was the overwhelming personal drive to complete the study, despite difficulties throughout the journey. This superordinate theme has two subordinate themes, as follows:

Superordinate Theme 1	Subordinate Themes
Personal Drive to Complete Doctoral Study	1. Motivation to Complete Doctoral Study 2. Self-Determination & Persistence

The personal drive to complete doctoral study, as the superordinate theme, has two subthemes of motivation, and self-determination with persistence. These themes have been manifested differently for all ten participants, although there were some commonalities across participants in the two groups of completers and some convergence with secondary literature. In terms of participants' initial motivations in coming to study in the UK, four of the timely completers (Stephen, Hannah, Sarah, Beth) and three of the late completers (Tim, John, Meg) phenomenologically claimed that their career would have stagnated if they had not completed a PhD, and this, they claimed, was the motivating factor, in line with Deci and Ryan (2010) as an act of compliance being an extrinsic motivator. Yet upon hermeneutic interpretation and sense making, it became apparent that in some cases (Tim, John, Beth and Meg particularly) there were other issues at play, such as the need for family safety and a British education for their children, which resulted in more intrinsic motivators to study in the UK, but not to necessarily complete the study in a timely manner. Interestingly, therefore, for three of the late

completers, this particular intrinsic motivation could have impacted their time to completion. Stephen's initial extrinsic motivation soon turned to an intrinsic motivation to complete the study so that he could return to his wife and child.

Self-determination and persistence had been evident in all ten participants' lived experience, although, again, this was manifested differently. For example, whilst Archie (late completer) masked the truth (from himself and others) about his unsatisfactory self-identity, he had found ways to persist with his doctoral study to final completion, albeit with help from his support network in London and Saudi Arabia. For Ruth (timely completer), her persistence was related to her strong desire to please her family, she had promised that she would become a Doctor and this drove her to study long hours every day, akin to the findings in Tremblay et al., (2009) in terms of 'optimal functioning' so that she could make her family proud.

7.6 Superordinate Theme Two: Self-Identity as a Doctoral Candidate

The second superordinate theme is the changed self-identity as a doctoral candidate. This superordinate theme has three subordinate themes, as follows:

Superordinate Theme 2	Subordinate Themes
Self-Identity as a Doctoral Candidate	1. Identifying as a Student 2. Acculturation 3. Financial and Power Status

Smith et al., (2013) referred to a changed self-identity as a specific commonality across many IPA studies, in terms of the identity changes associated with major life transitions. Hermeneutic analysis of the lived experiences of all ten of the participants (from both timely completers and late completers) in this study is in agreement with this; as pursuing doctoral study (in a foreign country) to completion was found to have had an impact on self-identity, as a life changing

journey of several years. Therefore, in common with the work of Smith et al., (2013), whilst self-identity as a doctoral candidate was found to be manifested differently across all ten participants, it was, nonetheless, present as a superordinate theme. Interpretation highlighted that participants' self-identities had morphed into something different during the course of their study period, in common with Denicolo's statement that '*you will truly see yourself as a different person*' (Denicolo et al., 2018, p45).

In terms of identifying as a student (a subordinate theme), Archie's self-identity had completely changed (Archie was a late completer); back in Saudi Arabia, he held a responsible job, he was the patriarch of the family, and had amassed significant wealth. As a student, he was not perceived to be as important as he felt back home, even his supervisors had not considered him in their career moves and professional life, leaving Archie feeling let down. His self-identity as an important man was lost and he compensated for this by spending money to make him '*feel good*'.

One universal experience, in agreement with Zhou et al., (2008); Ye, (2006); Yeh & Inose (2003); and Schweisfurth & Gu., (2009), was that the first few days and weeks of arriving in the UK for the PhD study was particularly difficult, and in some cases, traumatic. Culture shock was phenomenologically claimed by all participants in both groups, except Phillip (late completer). Participants often talked about how they had questioned their actions of coming to the UK at some point in the PhD journey and that they had had times when they felt unable to cope. These changes ultimately impacted on their feelings of self-identity and a commonality was that at some stage of the doctoral journey participants had asked themselves '*what am I doing*?'

In addition, participants struggled with multiple, and often competing identities that they were experiencing. For Phillip particularly (late completer), simultaneously trying to be a doctoral

candidate, a husband and father, a 'success' in his own language and culture, and being a provider/breadwinner for the family, had caused him to suffer depression ('*I didn't know who I was anymore')*.

This superordinate theme therefore highlighted that participants had significant personality changes during, after, or on reflection of the experience. The participants found, on reflection, that they had developed a new self-identity, and some had learned new things about themselves in the process of completing the PhD.

7.7 Superordinate Theme Three: Physical and Mental Wellbeing

This superordinate theme attempts to encompass all of the different ways the participants' health had been affected by the experience of a PhD study.

This superordinate theme has two subordinate themes, as follows:

Superordinate Theme 3	Subordinate Themes
Physical and Mental Wellbeing	1. Self-Efficacy and its impact on Self-Esteem 2. Personal Resilience

The doctoral candidates' physical and mental wellbeing was the third superordinate theme and had two subthemes of self-efficacy and its impact on self-esteem, and personal resilience. These themes have been manifested differently for all ten participants, although there were some commonalities across participants (from both groups of completers) and some convergence with secondary literature. The main focus here is on mental wellbeing, which was interpreted as being significant in nine of the participants (excluding Tim, a late completer, who had taken 60 months to complete his doctorate). Phillip, also a late completer, expressed his need to be physically fit, as a phenomenological claim.

Another commonality across all five of the participants of SG2 (late completers) was the problem (and often stigma) of not being able to articulate effectively in English. Thoughts of feeling inadequate (John and Phillip particularly), not clever enough or not good enough at writing English were also claimed, demonstrating feelings of poor self-efficacy. Archie did not claim this phenomenologically, but on hermeneutic analysis, his PA would normally have drafted all of his work prior to him editing it – he was not usually required to compose long pieces of text without support.

All five of the participants in SG1 (timely completers: Stephen, Hannah, Sarah, Beth, Ruth) and also Meg (as a late completer in SG2), claimed that their faith was an important psychological aid and they reflected that their religious beliefs had been central to their wellbeing.

All of the participants in both groups had had to show personal resilience in overcoming various difficulties and, through their eventual completion; they had managed to find some self-satisfaction, boosting self-esteem.

In the secondary literature, Wright & Cochrane (2010) suggested that PhD students that have not had what they described as 'developmental stages in life' tend to be psychologically less robust than those that have. Whilst this was found to be the case for Phillip, who felt that he had generally become more personally resilient as a result of his difficulties, this was not borne out in the findings from the other nine participants. For example, the death of Hannah's mother was as catastrophic for her as the death of her father two years before, where taking Wright and Cochrane's argument, having had the life experience of one parental death may in some way have prepared her for the next. Rather, the findings here show that even when a significantly devastating event, such as the death of a parent, has occurred, people react and cope in different ways, and this can, in no way, make a person more psychologically robust (or

personally resilient) in preparation for a future event, as each trauma is uniquely different. Yet, for what could be considered relatively small but nonetheless stressful events, Phillip, for one, felt more personally resilient at the end of the doctoral journey.

7.8 Superordinate Theme Four: Support Network

The fourth superordinate theme related to the people that had formed a support network around the doctoral candidate. This superordinate theme has three subordinate themes, as follows:

Superordinate Theme 4	Subordinate Themes
Support Network	1. Family Support 2. Supervisor Relationship 3. Scholarly Communities

The support network around the candidate refers to the people who, in some way, contribute to the candidate being able to successfully complete the study, similar to Arthur's (2017) 'scaffolding mechanism' around the collaborative learning experiences of international students; although this study referred only to scaffolding in relation to overcoming acculturation distress, not in the whole doctoral experience. There were three subordinate themes related to this superordinate theme: family support, the supervisor relationship, and the scholarly community.

In four of the cases, the participants were in the UK completely alone, so not living with family members - who had remained in their country of origin (Stephen, Sarah, and Ruth from SG1: timely completers; and Archie – as a late completer). All four had suffered homesickness and loneliness (although Archie was not self-aware of this, rather he had hidden this behind his constant visits to London to be with his cousins and also his blame for the supervisors and institution). However, interestingly, when comparing whether or not the candidate had children

living with them, four of the five participants in SG1 spent at least a proportion of the time without them.

For Tim, his support network had been strong and stable; he had the same supervisor throughout, he had his wife and children with him and he had a group of friends in his scholarly community (albeit non-native English-speaking ones).

In line with secondary literature on the importance of the supervisor relationship (Lee, 2012; Taylor, 2012; Elliot et al., 2016; Park, 2005; Delamont et al., 2000; Tan & Meijer, 2001), this was also a central discussion point in all ten cases. Beth and Tim had had a particularly positive experience throughout the whole journey, whilst Ruth had suffered 12 months with poor supervision and then thrived throughout three years of excellent supervision. Stephen had struggled when his first supervisor left the university as he had invested a lot of time in forming that relationship and the instability of a new relationship caused him to suffer some delays in his progress. Sarah had not had a positive experience with her supervisor, indeed he had inhibited her progress and affected her self-esteem.

For the two participants without children (Sarah and Ruth), there was understandably more emphasis on the supervisor (in Ruth's case) or the scholarly community of friends (in Sarah's case), although this was also phenomenologically claimed by Hannah ('*I could not have done it without them).* These interpretations are in support of the findings on the importance of social support from peers as a critical success factor in Leichty et al., (2009).

7.9 Underlying Reasons for Time to Completion

It can be seen that there was a flow from the phenomenological claims made by the participants of the two groups in their reflections, to the hermeneutic sense-making, in agreement with what Sartre argued: 'existence comes before essence' (1948: 26. Cited in Smith et al., 2009) meaning

that the participants, during the course of their reflections on their lived experience, were developing themselves in their process to understand the experience. In other words, the participants had shared their lived experience in a reflective way through their phenomenological claims, and there had been sense making in a hermeneutic way (in terms of what their lived experience had meant for them) and in a double-hermeneutic way (how the researcher reflected and interpreted the data), and so this chapter has 'teased out' the underlying reasons for time to completion of study for the two groups of completers by interpreting the findings and analysis in an idiographic way, drawing commonalities and differences between the participants. Idiographic analysis is a core component of IPA, where the focus of the study moves from phenomenological claims and hermeneutic sense making and returns to the very particular, interpreted participants' core experience (Smith et al., 2013).

7.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has drawn out the commonalities and differences between the two groups of completers: those that had completed in a timely manner, and those that had taken longer to complete their doctoral study and therefore were considered to be late completers. All four of the superordinate themes had been manifested differently for each participant, although the commonality of having a strong faith was evident amongst the timely completers, and the presence of children with the candidate in the UK could have potentially hindered timely completion for four of the participants in Study Group 2.

The final chapter of this thesis is the Conclusions and Recommendations, where the threads of all of the chapters will be drawn together, to show how the aim and objectives of this study have been achieved.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Chapter Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the lived experiences of recently completed, non-native English-speaking doctoral holders, to establish the factors impacting on timely completion of study. This final chapter of the thesis will conclude the main findings of the study to demonstrate how the aim and objectives have been achieved, and then discuss the academic and applied contributions to the study. The chapter will also include a review of the limitations of the study and highlight related areas for further investigation.

8.2 Synthesis of Main Findings

This study has employed a comparative IPA strategy to understand the lived experiences of ten non-native English-speaking doctoral holders; five that had completed their doctorate in a timely manner of within 52 months, and five that had taken longer and therefore were considered to be late completers. The participants each reflected on their experience at the University of Salford during an in-depth, narrative design interview, and these qualitative data were studied using IPA to uncover the underlying reasons for timely or late completion of study.

The individual lived experiences of the participants highlighted that it is their unique personal make-up, in terms of their motivational drive, self-identity, personal wellbeing, and strength of their support network, which determine how quickly they complete their study, rather than the superficial factors that are presented in the previously published literature.

To achieve the aim of this research, five objectives and related research questions were examined. These will now be reviewed, providing a structure for the concluding discussions.

8.2.1 Achievement of Objective 1

The first objective of this study was to establish the current landscape of doctoral education in the UK for non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates, in order to set the context and lay the foundations for the study; this was achieved in the first part of the literature review.

Several authors have published on the changes that have occurred in doctoral education over the last three decades, and the changes have been profound and wide ranging, particularly in the last decade. These macro changes include different providers entering the market (for example with Doctoral Training Centres), different types of doctorate being awarded (such as professional and practice-based doctorates), different modes of study being offered (flexible and distance learning), different bodies and mechanisms governing doctorates (new bodies being formed and merged), and increased numbers of candidates studying for doctoral degrees. Not only has the number of doctoral students increased, but the diversity of the doctoral community has increased, as globalisation and internationalisation mean that more students are travelling outside of their own country for study purposes. Immigration standards for entering the UK to study have become more stringent under the UKVI Tier 4 visa scheme (UKVI, 2019), and it is not clear (at the time of writing) what impact the current political situation of Brexit will have on potential students wishing to study in the UK in the future. Whilst the non-traditional candidate profile, including non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates, have made a welcome contribution to the UK doctoral study landscape, they may not have the skills and competencies that doctoral providers took for granted in the past.

The timely completion of doctorates therefore remains an important factor for all, not least the candidate, paying high fees and taking huge risks in embarking on a doctorate. Whilst completion statistics have been improving recently, as doctoral providers have changed their practices to suit this new reality, there still remains a problem, as even one lived experience of either attrition or untimely completion can have a significant impact on the individual.

The impact of all of these changes has, therefore, been felt by all stakeholders in doctoral education, and at the very heart of this is the doctoral candidate, whose voice has often been overlooked.

8.2.2 Achievement of Objective 2

The second objective in this study was to identify the factors that impact on time to completion of PhD study, and this was achieved through the literature review chapter and the pre-study focus group in the primary data for this thesis.

The literature review highlighted the most commonly cited factors impacting on completion of doctoral study, although there was limited empirical evidence to support this from a UK perspective. Factors such as financial concerns (including the need to work part-time), a poor supervisor relationship, problems with the thesis itself, having a poor research environment, a lack of skills training, and administrative issues, were all identified as having an impact on time to completion.

However, the literature review also revealed the gaps, in terms of UK based qualitative studies on the untimely completion of doctoral study, for non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates. It was posited that many of the reviewed studies have been conducted in either a positivistic way, which has simplified the factors put forward for untimely completion and does not address the ‘why’ question; in a non-empirical way, bringing into question the validity of the work; or has been conducted in the USA and Australia.

The pre-study focus group was used to collect preliminary ideas surrounding untimely completion of doctoral study that had been gathered from the secondary literature. Thematic analysis was used as the analytical technique, and there were found to be commonalities between the emergent themes from the pre-study focus group and the secondary literature. However, there were also indications (unconfirmed at that stage, resulting mainly from intuition) that these findings were not the whole story, that there were potentially unarticulated or underlying reasons that doctoral candidates had not been prepared to discuss in an open focus group.

8.2.3 Achievement of Objective 3

The third objective was to explore the lived experiences of two groups of non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates during their journey of study. The implications of the literature review findings (at that stage) and the pre-study focus group were that in order to address this 'why' question (of why some students take longer to complete than others), the main study required a purely qualitative approach; and the research design was then re-developed on this basis, as an IPA study.

The study therefore had a constructivist phenomenological ontology, a hermeneutically interpretivist epistemology, a value-laden axiology with reflexivity at the core; and had an inductive and exploratory approach. It thus focused on depth and richness of data from two small samples, rather than breadth of data across a single broader sample. The main study was conducted as a cross-sectional study, using a mono qualitative method of inquiry in semi-structured narrative style interviews.

These philosophical underpinnings and research design considerations were the foundations of the study, since IPA (developed by Jonathan Smith in the 1990s) examines how people understand their own lived experience, how they reflect on it and how they (and the researcher) make meaning of this experience. Using this strategy gave voice to the candidates themselves; it provided the trusting space for participants to reflect on their lived experience as a non-native English-speaking doctoral holder.

The phenomenological reality of the lived experience was articulated uniquely for each individual. The hermeneutic sense making of the interview transcripts, and the double-hermeneutic circle of the researcher's experience influencing the interpretation, allowed for new findings to emerge. The idiographic analysis, which returns to the very specific (the individual), revealed previously uncovered, underlying reasons for time to completion of doctoral study.

The study has, therefore, achieved the third objective through the use of a comparative IPA, as an effective strategy to gain a deep understanding of each individual's unique lived experience as a non-native English-speaking doctoral candidate.

8.2.4 Achievement of Objective 4

The fourth objective was to establish the underlying factors impacting on time to completion of study for non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates.

Four superordinate themes were interpreted as forming the basis of a Gestalt, with several related subordinate themes. The superordinate themes were the personal drive to complete the doctoral study; self-identity as a doctoral candidate; physical and mental wellbeing; and the support network around the candidate. The phenomenological claims and hermeneutic sense

making were presented through these four superordinate themes and related subordinate themes. The four superordinate themes were all manifested differently for each individual, since each person is made up of complex life experiences which all interrelate to form the set of ontological beliefs that the person holds about their doctoral experience.

The personal drive to complete doctoral study, as the superordinate theme, is made up of two subthemes of motivation, and self-determination with persistence. These themes were manifested differently for all participants across both groups, although there were some commonalities and similarities across participants and some convergence with secondary literature. In terms of participants' initial motivations in coming to study in the UK, seven of the participants' phenomenological claims (four timely completers and three late completers) were that their career would have stagnated if they had not completed a PhD, and this, they claimed, was the motivating factor. However, upon hermeneutic interpretation and sense making, it became apparent that in some cases (Tim, John, and Meg) who were late completers, and Beth (a timely completer) there were other issues at play, such as the need for family safety and a British education for their children, which resulted in more intrinsic motivators to study in the UK, but not to necessarily complete the study in a timely manner. For Tim, John and Meg, this particular intrinsic motivation could, therefore, have impacted their time to completion. Stephen's initial extrinsic motivation soon turned to an intrinsic motivation to complete the study so that he could return to his wife and child.

Self-determination and persistence had been evident in all ten participants' lived experience, although, again, this was manifested differently. For example, whilst Archie (late completer) masked the truth (from himself and others) about his unsatisfactory self-identity, he had found ways to persist with his doctoral study to final completion, albeit late (in 58 months) and with help from his support network in London and Saudi Arabia. For Ruth, who completed in 48 months, her persistence was related to her strong desire to please her family, she had promised

that she would become a ‘Doctor’ and this drove her to optimal functioning for long hours every day.

Self-identity as a doctoral candidate was also found to be manifested differently (and in different strengths) for all ten participants across both study groups. In terms of identifying as a student (a subordinate theme), Archie’s self-identity had completely changed from being successful and secure back in his home country, to feeling insecure as a non-native English-speaking doctoral candidate, and he therefore disappeared and procrastinated for as long as he could. Acculturation distress was also found to be a problem with participants, leading some to question their own actions of coming to the UK at some point in the PhD journey. In addition, participants struggled with multiple, and often competing identities that they were experiencing. For Phillip particularly (who took 60 months to complete), simultaneously trying to be a doctoral candidate, a husband and father, a ‘success’ in his own language and culture, and being a provider/breadwinner for the family, had caused him to ultimately suffer depression. This superordinate theme therefore highlighted that participants had significant personality changes during, after, or on reflection of the experience. The participants found, on reflection, that they had developed a new self-identity, and some had learned new things about themselves in the process of completing the PhD.

The doctoral candidates’ wellbeing was the third superordinate theme and had two subthemes of self-efficacy and its impact on self-esteem, and personal resilience. A commonality to emerge across all five of the participants of Study Group 2 (late completers) was the problem (and often stigma) of not being able to articulate effectively in English. Thoughts of feeling inadequate (John and Phillip particularly), not clever enough or not good enough at writing English were also claimed, demonstrating feelings of poor self-efficacy. Archie did not claim this phenomenologically, but on hermeneutic analysis, his PA would normally have drafted all

of his work prior to him editing it – he was not usually required to compose long pieces of text without support.

All five of the participants in Study Group 1 (timely completers: Stephen, Hannah, Sarah, Beth, Ruth) and also Meg (as a late completer in Study Group 2), claimed that their faith was an important psychological aid and they reflected that their religious beliefs had been central to their wellbeing.

Being beset by grief at the loss of parents was also shown to have impacted on the completion timeline. The findings showed that even when a significantly devastating event, such as the death of a parent, has occurred, people react and cope in different ways, and this can, in no way, make a person more psychologically robust (or personally resilient) in preparation for a future event, as each trauma is uniquely different. All of the participants had had to show personal resilience in overcoming various difficulties and, through their eventual completion (whether timely or late), they had managed to find some self-satisfaction, boosting self-esteem.

The support network around the candidate was the fourth superordinate theme. In four of the cases (three of which were timely completers), the participants were in the UK alone, without family members, who had remained in their country of origin. All four had suffered homesickness and loneliness (although Archie, as a late completer, was not self-aware of this). An interesting finding was that when comparing whether or not the candidate had children living with them, four of the five participants in Study Group 1 (timely completers) spent at least a proportion of the time without them.

A central discussion point in all ten cases was the importance of the supervisor relationship, in line with secondary literature and the pre-study focus group. Beth (a timely completer) and Tim (a late completer) had had a particularly positive experience throughout the whole journey, whilst Ruth, who completed in 48 months, had suffered 12 months with poor supervision and

then thrived throughout three years of excellent supervision. Stephen had struggled when his first supervisor left the university as he had invested a lot of time in forming that relationship and the instability of a new relationship caused him to suffer some delays in his progress, yet he was still able to complete in 52 months. Sarah's experience of supervision was poor; she had found her supervisor to be distant and unsupportive, and this had caused Sarah's self-esteem to deteriorate. However, despite this very difficult relationship, Sarah had completed in 48 months.

The data therefore showed that there were a complex set of interrelated factors that affected completion of doctoral study for the participants in both groups in this study, and sometimes, for the untimely completers, these were hidden behind institutionally or socially acceptable reasons for untimely completion, such as different supervisors being appointed or the study context; yet far deeper underlying reasons for untimely completion emerged in the phenomenological, hermeneutic and idiographic analysis of this study.

8.2.5 Achievement of Objective 5

The final objective was to compare the commonalities and differences between the two study groups. The first study group had completed their doctorate in a timely manner of within 52 months, whilst the second group had taken longer to complete their study and were late completers. Undertaking a comparative IPA of two groups of completers enabled a deeper interpretation of claims made, with discriminating factors, so that the core, underlying reasons that contributed to timely or late completion could be uncovered in a meaningful way.

In terms of superordinate theme one – *personal drive*, for three of the untimely completers in Study Group 2 (Tim, John and Meg), the intrinsic motivation of wishing to come to the UK for study was based on their beliefs that their children would benefit from a British education and

living in relative safety, although this was also expressed by Beth, who completed within 48 months. It should be noted that this intrinsic motivation was to come to the UK in the first place, not necessarily to complete the study in a timely way, potentially raising the possibility that timely completion was not in their best interest.

Struggling with competing *self-identities* was another commonality for the participants of Study Group 2, relating to superordinate theme two, although this was manifested differently for all five. For Phillip particularly, his competing roles of student, employee, son, husband and father had undoubtedly caused him personal distress.

The commonality of having a strong faith, as part of *personal wellbeing* (superordinate theme three), was evident amongst all of the participants in Study Group 1 - the timely completers. All five participants expressed their faith as being a core part of their being, and this had potentially helped their mental strength and personal resilience; their ontological beliefs contributing to their mental strength in knowing they were doing something in the eyes of God. In contrast, all of the participants in Study Group 2 demonstrated that their personal resilience had been compromised by their lack of English language skills, although this had been manifested differently for all five. The language barrier during the writing up period had been a significant hindrance and this had affected self-efficacy.

In terms of superordinate theme four (*support network*), four of the five participants in Study Group 1 had spent at least some of their study time alone in the UK, without the presence of children or wider family with the candidate in the UK. This poses the possibility that being alone could potentially be linked to the increase in available time and determination to see the study through to completion. In contrast, four of the five participants in Study Group 2 could have potentially been hindered by having their families and children living with them.

In conclusion, whilst all four of the superordinate themes had been manifested differently for each participant in both study groups, there were some commonalities and differences that could be drawn out. By undertaking a comparative IPA of two groups of completers, it was possible to gain a deeper interpretation of claims made, with discriminating factors, so that the core, underlying reasons that contributed to timely or late completion could be uncovered in a meaningful way.

8.3 Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study was the lack of previously published qualitative literature on the lived experiences of non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates in the completion of their study, against which direct comparisons could be made. Previous studies have tended to be reductionist in nature or have not been conducted from a UK perspective.

The pre-study focus group also presented some limitations, and these were expressed in Section 3.10.2.2. The limitations relate to the characteristics of the pre-study sample (as being third year candidates), the role of the researcher as English language tutor, and the methodological tool of a focus group being used, which is different to the methodological tool used in the main study (i.e. that of IPA).

Another potential limitation is that the data in the main study were gathered from one institution, with two small groups of five participants in each study. As such, the depth of study has compromised the breadth, and so the study findings cannot be generalised to a wider population. Commonalities and differences between the two groups in this context are expressed, but these do not represent incidences of existence, they are presented as evidence that these findings exist in the reflections of the participants in this study.

8.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This study has made both academic and applied contributions to knowledge and these will now be discussed.

8.4.1 Academic Contributions

The outcome of this research is a Gestalt of the lived experiences of two groups of five non-native English-speaking candidates: one group that had completed their doctorate in a timely manner of within 52 months, and one group that had taken longer and were therefore considered late completers. Commonalities and differences between the two study groups were presented, contributing to the understanding of the 'real' (underlying) reasons that doctoral candidates may or may not complete their doctorate in a timely manner. This contributes to bridging the gaps in literature on reasons for time to completion of doctoral study in the UK generally, and provides new literature that articulates the narratives - the lived experiences - that doctoral completers have encountered along their journey.

The quality, or validity of this study, has been examined in light of Yardley's (2000) principles for qualitative studies, in order to give voice to, interpret and understand, the lived experiences of non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates as they have reflected on their study journey. The sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance of the data, were all evident in this study.

The use of a comparative IPA as a research strategy in the context of analysing the lived experience of non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates in their completion of study, is

novel; and as such is an academic contribution to knowledge. The previously silent ‘voices’ of the participants were articulated in their reflections of their lived experience; they were heard and interpreted by a reflexive, empathetic researcher; and ultimately understood, which leads to the applied contributions to knowledge.

8.4.2 Applied Contributions

The applied, or practical, contributions of this study lie in the deep understandings of the lived experiences of the participants of this study. Professionals in the supervision, management and development of non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates can acknowledge that a ‘one size fits all’ mentality cannot be presented as a panacea for addressing completion rates or indeed satisfaction of doctoral candidates. However, by providing a combination of different mechanisms, such as supervisory teams, increased pastoral support, training (in English language acquisition and UK acculturation), self-awareness and resilience, encouraging and providing opportunities to develop social networks, and of course, good signposting when candidates are psychologically suffering, can all help the non-native English-speaking candidate enjoy a more positive experience of this life changing journey.

8.5 Implications for Future Research

This study has highlighted the need for further research into the lived experiences of non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates. Such research should focus on the individual experiences in a qualitative way, so that more understanding of the differences between individuals can be understood. For example, it would be interesting for further study to be

conducted on those students who did not complete (at all) after a period of time, in order to better understand the barriers to completion of doctoral study.

Another possible route is the use of various experiential and mindful methods to enhance IPA getting more 'experience-close' by enabling participants to provide a different level of their feelings and experience, as proposed by Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009). For example, through the use of photo elicitation, whereby photographs have the power to evoke deeper elements of consciousness, such as underlying feelings and emotions, due to the evolutionary physical basis of the parts of the brain that process visual information (Harper, 2002; Elliot et al., 2016). Whilst not the focus of this study, it is an area for further development in future work on the lived experiences of non-native English-speaking doctoral candidates to enhance providing a different level of their feelings and experience.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Reflexive Analysis

In this reflexive analysis, I am going to write using the first person, as this will help the reader to understand my professional background in relation to my interpretation of the findings, and my multi layered identity as an employee of the University of Salford supporting doctoral candidates, and as a research student myself. Just like everybody else, my own narrative is complex and unique, and my personal history and make-up all contribute to my beliefs and values in terms of the kind of person and kind of researcher that I am today. My lens through which I view the world is therefore mine alone and I acknowledge this is my reflection and interpretation of the lived experiences in this study. This dynamic relationship between my research, my work, my own motivations, my professional identity, my wellbeing and my support network all combine and are reflected throughout this thesis; it is the 'rich tapestry of life'. I share my personal story to help to 'validate' myself as an empathetic researcher. In terms of my work, I can identify with Etherington (2004) who said that during the course of writing her book she felt like one of those people who run alongside a marathon runner for a few miles, giving encouragement and support, never crossing the line herself, yet in my own case, those (many) PhD students that I have supported have gone over the finish line in completing their study, leaving me behind. I noted this in my reflexive diary, using different metaphors from Etherington, but with the same meaning: '*I'm always the bridesmaid and never the bride'.*

I first registered for a PhD in 1998, having completed my bachelor degree and PGCE, and having secured my first permanent job as a Lecturer at the University of Salford. I had no idea what a PhD was or what I had to do, but my colleagues were doing it and seemed to be the next logical step; plus the university were prepared to pay for it. On reflection, I was only mildly extrinsically motivated, there was not enough real enthusiasm. My supervisor, allocated at that

time, was an elusive, ego-centric, stuffy character and after a couple of meetings my motivation (or lack of) waned even further and I stopped thinking about it and simply dropped off. There was no further discussion about it. On reflection, I gave up because I was not motivated or enthusiastic enough to get a PhD, and equally my allocated supervisor evidently felt the same way.

My second foray into the PhD world came in 2002. I had met a highly motivated colleague at the University of Salford and she was prepared to take me on as one of her students. We had a good relationship, but I could not understand why she persisted in repeating the same two words at each and every meeting. Of course, I had not realised the importance of the '*so what*' question. Work became busier, I took on more responsibility, and eventually stopped the PhD as this was the easiest variable to lose. On reflection, I gave up because I had not understood what was required of me, nor appreciated the value of the PhD, and consequently everything else seemed much more important.

In 2008, my husband and I adopted our two children, and life became very busy at home during the day. However, in the evenings when the children were in bed I needed some brain stimulation and decided to re-register for the PhD. Unfortunately, it was not meant to be, as my Dad passed away, and shortly after that my Mum was diagnosed with cancer. Of course, the PhD had to be shelved once again. My Mum passed away in March 2010 and the remainder of that year was spent trying to organise everything in the new reality of my life. I began proof reading PhD theses for additional income, with a positive by-product of developing my own understanding of how a thesis could be argued. It was at this stage that I knew that I was ready for the challenge once more.

At the start of 2011, the Pro Vice Chancellor Research (at that time) asked me if I would be interested in registering for a PhD again, but this time to explore why PhD students had such poor completion rates. He called it a 'PhD on a PhD'. I was hugely honoured to have been asked and had a personal history that meant I could see the importance of such a study. It was to be a mixed methods research study with questionnaires in different HEIs combined with interviews of key stakeholders in Management, Supervision and Administration. It was hoped that a strategic solution could be provided to speed up untimely completers at the university. All was going well until one Saturday morning in late 2011 when my supervisor sent me an email to say that he was leaving the university and moving abroad. I felt bereft. I have always kept a notebook of my thoughts; at that time, I did not realise how useful it would be from a reflexive journal point of view, but one extract reads as follows:

'I'm absolutely devastated. I don't know what to do, whether to carry on with another supervisor, move my PhD to his new university or just give up.'

After picking myself up, and refusing to let this set me back, I was left with no choice but to 'upgrade' my co-supervisor to main supervisor and find a new co-supervisor, knowing that the subject matter could change and that the relationship dynamics of my previous supervisor could not be matched. I knew the relationship with these two people was not going to work right from the start; two big egos vying for position, and me caught in the middle. However, for many reasons which later emerged, and which would be unprofessional to discuss in a public document, I am going to omit that period of 18 months from this journey narrative. The whole episode left me feeling worthless and useless (note self-efficacy theory and self-determination theory), and I truly understood the importance of the supervisor relationship and how much it can impact on the candidate's whole life; not just the study. Thankfully I was blessed with

some excellent advice and support from friends and colleagues and in spring/summer 2013, I was able to transfer to a new supervisor.

Professor Jason Underwood was able to restore some confidence and self-belief that I was capable. He reignited my passion for research and introduced a new idea and methodological approach that I had not considered: that of IPA. It soon became apparent that this was a new methodological approach for this context and one which would fit perfectly, given my personal history. My notebook became more structured as a 'Reflexive Journal' and I collected ideas, thoughts and feelings about my work and the PhD process.

Unfortunately, as with many PhD candidates, ill health followed, and I took 3 months off work and an interruption of study. I came back to a new job in a new department and threw myself into work, at the expense of the PhD. I began to understand the importance of having the basics in place before a candidate can 'indulge' themselves in conducting a PhD study (note: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs). An extract reads:

> *'How can I spend time doing this damn thing when I'm a wife, mother, doing proofreading, and working at Salford? It's ridiculous to think that I can do all of this stuff and do a PhD. What am I doing? Would it not be better to concentrate on doing one thing properly rather than everything half-heartedly?'*

I struggled for a year trying to manage everything. My salary was not enough to pay the mortgage and the bills, so I had to continue proof reading other students' theses. One extract reads:

> *'Maslow's Hierarchy – never a truer depiction of the struggle of life! My physiological needs are not being met – okay I'm not hungry, thirsty and I do live in a house, but I have no money to enjoy life unless I do this extra work.'*

Finally, in July 2015, I could continue no longer and took a further interruption of study, for 12 months. My grief at the loss of my parents was immense, my marriage was broken, my children were exhausting, my work was tough, and my mental health had suffered to such an extent that I questioned the value of my life. My depression was pervasive and all encompassing. With much help from those closest to me and from medical professionals, I was eventually able to see through the dark and come out the other side. We moved house as a reunited, but fragile family, and things slowly started to improve. I came back to study in August 2016, by now seriously behind, and wondering if I could ever actually finish it (note: self-efficacy theory).

Since April 2017, when I passed the second main PhD assessment, I have been working at a more tempered speed, so that I have a better balance with all the identities that I simultaneously occupy. My reflections during this time have been incredibly useful and keeping the reflexive journal has been a cathartic experience. In my work, my empathetic stance has helped current PhD students in their personal study journey and I feel privileged to be working with people that possess what Denicolo et al., (2018) describe as 'grit'. Listening to my participants reflect on their own story has helped me to self-reflect and thus interpret their experiences, as a hermeneutic circle. It has taught me that all problems are relative, yet to each person at that moment, they may seem insurmountable.

In summary, therefore, the axiological position for this thesis could be none other than a fully value laden stance, since not only my study, but also my job and my personal narrative are all associated with the PhD itself. It is rather like examining others and simultaneously oneself through another lens. I could not, therefore, have conducted this study any other way.

Appendix 2: UKCGE Events and Conferences

A workshop organised by UKCGE entitled 'Doctoral Completion Rates: Best Practice and Emerging Trends' took place in the Hallam Conference Centre, just off Oxford Circus, in London, on 18th January 2012. The delegates were mainly PhD Supervisors and PGR Managers. At this time, the conversations were around how to get PhD candidates to complete more quickly. It was a workshop that was conducted as key note presentations followed by group work activities. The main findings from the day, (see Appendix 3), were that people really did not know how to solve this problem of untimely completion. Several ideas were put forward, such as using administrative managers to 'heat up' the process, but no real solutions were posed.

At an event in Birmingham on 3rd July 2012, the researcher's supervisor (at that time) presented on the themes of PhD completion with Salford as the case study, and the challenges that HEIs face in attracting international students in the first place and then to enable them to complete a PhD. The researcher made a small contribution by presenting some of the challenges to the delegates from a student perspective in completing a PhD.

The researcher presented at a UKCGE workshop, conducted at the University of Surrey, on 5th October 2012, which was organised to provide a forum for discussion on the training and development of higher degree supervisors and the impact of postgraduate research. Seven doctoral candidates, including the researcher, were asked to present brief personal testimonies about their research journey. Following the testimonies, there followed a discussion activity in groups of around 10 delegates, one of which the researcher was asked to chair. The groups were asked to consider what they thought were the barriers to timely completion of doctoral study.

This workshop (and another organised by SRIHE – Society for Research in Higher Education) led Dr Sara Delamont to contribute to the second chapter of 'Research Journeys' edited by Lee, Blackmore and Seal (2013), in which she wrote:

> *'As I listened to the seven speakers I felt myself carried back thirty two years to a period in 1980 when BERA (The British Education Research Association) conducted an exploratory project on MPhil and PhD students in education…(using) open ended questions. The seven current research students could have been respondents to the open ended questions we sent out for BERA in 1980.'*
>
> (Delamont, 2013, cited in Lee, Blackmore and Seal)

These three UKCGE events / workshops provided insight from a professional viewpoint on the issue of doctoral completion, as well as being a useful contribution to the researcher's general understanding of the landscape for doctoral education in the UK.

The International Conference on the Developments in Doctoral Education and Training was in Edinburgh in April 2013, and the researcher presented the potential themes that had emerged from the literature review and pre-study focus group, along with Pam Denicolo, Dawn Duke and Jane Creaton.

At the UKCGE bi-annual conference in July 2018 in Bristol, the researcher presented some of the main findings from this study. This was an extremely useful event, as valuable feedback was gained from delegates, and the main study findings were welcomed.

Appendix 3: Participant Invitation and Consent Form

Dear ….

I'm contacting you because I would very much like you to participate in my PhD study, which is about experiences of being an international PhD candidate at the University of Salford. I know that your time is valuable, and I would really appreciate your help with my data collection. If you would be interested in participating in my study, then please read the following information and return the consent form overleaf.

Before you give your consent to participate in this study, it is important that you read the following explanation of the data collection process so that you know what to expect and you are able to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. There are two parts to my data collection – focus groups and interviews, the focus groups are a pre-study for the main study, which will be in depth interviews lasting around one hour. Please note that you have the right to withdraw your participation in the focus group or interview at any time.

The intention of this study is to explore how you have coped as an international researcher throughout your PhD study, how you have found the study process and what have been the barriers and enablers to your completion.

The literature has suggested several possible explanations of why some PhD students complete on time and some run over time. I would like to explore these with you, to see if these resonate with your experience. Your 'lived experience' of the PhD journey provides valuable data in terms of how best to help international PhD students in the future.

The focus groups will be an opportunity for you to discuss your PhD reflections on the themes with other international PhD candidates. All focus group participants must agree to keep the identity / names of other participants confidential. The in-depth interviews will be semi-

structured, this means that there are some themes that are used to guide the interview direction, but there will be plenty of opportunity for you to express how you have found the PhD journey in your own words. It is anticipated that the interview will last around an hour. If you agree beforehand, the focus group and interview will be audio-taped and later transcribed for the purpose of data analysis. The focus group will be conducted on the Peel Park campus and the interview will be conducted at a setting where you feel comfortable. I will be the only person who has access to the audiotape, and this will be stored securely in a locked office and destroyed once transcribed.

It is possible that you may feel uncomfortable talking about certain aspects of your experiences. Please remember that we can pause or stop the interview at any time. Your participation is entirely voluntary, in other words, you can withdraw from the study if you feel uncomfortable and your data will not be used in the study. The information gathered during this study will remain confidential in a locked filing cabinet during the study. I will be the only person who can access your data. There will not be any identification of individuals on the tapes, and participant's names will not be available to anyone. The tapes will be destroyed once they have been transcribed. I will never use your real name in my thesis, to protect your identity you will be assigned a pseudonym.

Informed Consent

The completion of the consent form below indicates that you agree to participate in this study.

Name:	Please tick as appropriate
I am willing to participate in a focus group regarding my experience of the PhD journey and I have read the process statement above.	
I am willing to participate in an in-depth interview regarding my experience of the PhD journey and I have read the process statement above.	
I understand that all comments will be anonymised and that no personal details will be released as part of this study.	
Signature:	

If you have any questions about the data collection process, please do not hesitate to contact me on any of the following:

Email: Office landline:

Personal mobile: Office location:

My Supervisor for this study is Professor Jason Underwood, his office is…

Appendix 4: General Information Questions and Prompts Sheet for Interviews

The questions and prompts below are to be used as a guide only, the general information is to be collected in the interview and the prompts are the main themes to be discussed in interviews.

Section 1: General Information

1. When did you originally register for your PhD? (month and year)
2. When did you complete your PhD?
3. What is your country of origin and first language?
4. What is your mode of study?
5. What is your subject area?
6. Who pays your university fees?
7. Who funds your living expenses?
8. What is your educational background / qualifications?
9. Which age category do you fit into?
   Under 30 years of age

   30 - 49

   50 – 69

   Over 70 years of age
10. What is your marital status?
11. Who do you live with?
12. Do you have children? How many? How old are they? Where do they live?
13. Do you have other dependents living here with you, for example parents.
14. What was your language level on entry? For example, IELTS 6.5.

Section 2: Prompts

A: Motivation – What motivated you to come to study here and complete your PhD?

What were your original motivations to study a PhD? Why did you want to do it? Has this driven you to complete? How have you kept your motivation to complete? Have you gone through periods of high and low motivation? Has your strength of character helped you along your journey? What / who has picked you up at your lowest points? Are you a perfectionist? Has this hindered your swift progress?

B: Finance – How has your financial status impacted on your PhD study?

How has your financial situation impacted on your study? How are you managing to live on your disposable income? Has this impacted on your conference attendance and travelling to collect primary data? Do you work to support your study?

C: Monitoring and Administration – Do the University systems help or hinder you to complete your study?

How have the University regulations relating to progression points, and ethical approval, impacted on you? Do you think that monitoring and tracking your PhD progress is a help or a hindrance to your PhD study? Would tighter controls motivate you to work? How?

D: Supervisor – How has your supervisor impacted on your PhD study?

Have you had the same supervisor for the whole journey? How would you describe your relationship with your supervisor? Does your supervisor fill you with confidence? Please

describe your self-esteem ‘journey’. Has your research design been compromised by your supervisor?

E: Research Environment – Does your research environment affect your work productivity?

Who are your main sources of support? Do you feel that the research environment has helped you in your study? Have you ever felt isolated in your PhD study? How helpful is the skills training offered by the university? Why? How helpful is the language training? Why? How have the resources provided to you, as a PhD candidate, such as desk space, funding for conference attendance, etc., impacted on you? Were you comfortable in your work environment?

F: Family and Social Life – Have your family and friends impacted on your PhD study?

Have your family and friends impacted on your time to complete your study? Please explain how. Please explain your family commitments. Describe how your family may need you to help them. Does this draw you away from your study? Do you have friends here in Salford? Do you spend time away from your study? Are you happy living in Salford? Do you yearn to return to your home country?

G: External – Are there any external factors that have impacted on your study?

These are the things that you could not have predicted would happen at the start of your study

H: Free Elicitation

Do you feel there are things that haven’t been covered in this interview, that have impacted on your time to complete your PhD? Are there any issues which have not been covered, or upon which you would like to add, which have really helped or hindered your PhD journey?

Appendix 5: Pre-Study Focus Group Handout

11am – 1pm, Wednesday 29th February 2012, Room 714b (Maxwell Building).

Thank you for participating in this session, I know that your time is valuable, and I appreciate your help with my PhD study. The purpose of this pilot workshop / brainstorming session is to gather initial thoughts and feelings about the motivations, expectations, barriers and enablers on your PhD journey.

Section A

Please note that your name and email address will only be used by myself to seek further clarification of any issue raised, and only if absolutely necessary. Your name will not be included in any write up or discussion about this session and you will be assigned a number to protect your anonymity.

1. **Name**
   ………
2. **Email Address**
   ……..
3. **Registration Date** (month and year)
   ……
4. **Expected Completion Date**
   ……
5. **Country of Origin and First Language…**……
6. **Gender** (please circle) M / F
7. **Mode of Study** (please circle) P/T F/T MERIT ProfDoc
8. **What is your subject area?**……

Section B

Please circle the option which most closely matches your situation.

9. Financial Support

Self Funded Fees Paid Fully Funded Other (Please State)

……

10. Educational Background

Masters from UK Masters or equivalent (Overseas) Other (Please state)

…….

11. Do you have a registered disability? Yes / No

12. What was your age on commencement of your PhD?

Under 25 26-35 36-45 46-55 56-65 Over 65

13. Who do you live with?

I live alone I live with friends I live with my parent(s)

I live with my spouse I live with my spouse and children

Other (please state)

……

Please comment on the following, as the discussion progresses.

Motivation to study PhD

Expectations before starting

University Regulations (Progression points, ethical approval)

Resources (desk space, funding, fees)

Support (Research environment, skills training)

Monitoring and Tracking (administrative, skills training)

Supervision

External Factors

What hinders progression of your study?

What would help you to complete on time?